

The background of the entire page is a complex, abstract composition. On the left side, there are several concentric circles, resembling a target or a ripple in water, rendered in shades of gray. On the right side, there is a dark, textured area that looks like a close-up of a rough surface or a dense pattern. In the upper right corner, there is a white silhouette of a person standing, facing right, with a jagged, irregular outline. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular area in the center.

CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES

20 YEARS OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT
HALLWALLS

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W

hen Robert Longo and Charles Clough, together with a loose collection of like-minded friends, turned a former ice house into an artist-run alternative space in Buffalo, New York in 1974, they were well aware that similar organizations were springing up all over the United States and Canada. But they could not have known that within ten years, Hallwalls Contemporary

Arts Center would be heralded in the art press as "the birthplace of post-modernism," with a reputation for presenting challenging work by artists, mediamakers, performers, musicians, and writers like Vito Acconci, Kathy Acker, Laurie Anderson, Barbara Bloom, Eric Bogosian, Jonathan Borofsky, Lester Bowie, Glenn Branca, Chris Burden, Yoshiko Chuma, Tony Conrad, Robert Creeley, Nancy Dwyer, Ethyl Eichelberger, Karen Finley, Eric Fischl, Philip Glass, Mike Glier, Jack Goldstein, Dan Graham, John Greyson, Group Material, Holly Hughes, Robert Irwin, Isaac Julien, Mike Kelley, Komar & Melamid, Robbie McCauley, Tim Miller, Joseph Nechvatal, Tony Oursler, Rachel Rosenthal, David Salle, Andres Serrano, Paul Sharits, Cindy Sherman, Michael Snow, Sun Ra, David Wojnarowicz, and Michael Zwack (among literally thousands of others), often early in their careers.

Yet there is much more to the story of Hallwalls than any such list of names could ever suggest. *Consider the Alternatives* takes a candid, in-depth look at the origins, evolution, and continued survival of one specific "alternative" over two decades, from the widely varied perspectives of more than 100 visiting artists, current and former staff, critics, collectors, and audience members. The book combines newly commissioned essays and interviews, an extensive timeline, photo documentation, catalogue statements, reviews, journal entries, and other archival materials to construct a complex portrait not only of Hallwalls and its hometown, but of 20 years of changes in the cultural and political climate of the country at large.

\$20.

Edited by Ronald Ehmke with Elizabeth Licata
Designed by Paul Szpakowski

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20 YEARS OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT
HALLWALLS

Edited by Ronald Ehmke
with Elizabeth Licata

Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center
Buffalo, New York

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Major support for this publication was provided by the Museum Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the Lannan Foundation. A complete list of other funders and contributors is included in an appendix to this publication.

ISBN 0-936739-20-7
LC#96-075585

Book and cover design by Paul Szpakowski

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HALLWALLS

CONTENTS

6

How to Read This Book (Hallwalls: A User's Guide)

Ronald Ehmke

11

The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face: Initial Impressions

Don Metz, Bruce Adams, Donna Jordan Dusel, Jody Lafond, Michael Basinski, Kathy High,
Amy Cappellazzo, Ronald Ehmke, Matthew Schwonke

PART ONE: PRINT THE LEGEND (MAKING HISTORY)

17

Buffalo: Outpost of the Postmodern (A Spontaneous Generation)

G. Roger Denson

21

1974-78: The Early Years

Anthony Bannon

27

Blame it on the Spaghetti: Reflections on the First Five Years

Anthony Bannon, Judy Treible, Joe Hryvniak, Charles Clough, Linda Cathcart, Linda Brooks, Jack Griffis,
Michael Zwack, George Howell, Cindy Sherman, Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, Kevin Noble,
Gary Judkins, Larry Lundy, Hal Crowther, Nancy Tobin Willig, Biff Henrich, Kevin Fix, John Maggiotto,
Debra S. Lary, G. Roger Denson, Marcia Tucker, William Currie, William Zimmer, Carrie Rickey, Kathy High

41

A Time of Disguises and Secret Codes

Richard Huntington

43

1982-89: The Wonder Years (A Personal View)

Stephen Gallagher

PART TWO: PROGRAMMING (MAKING WORK)

51

12 Exhibitions

Elizabeth Licata

57

Exhibitions

David Salle on Jack Goldstein, Dorit Cypis, G. Roger Denson, Charlotta Kotik on Jennifer Bartlett, Gary Nickard, Valentin Tatransky, Charlotta Kotik on Robert Longo, Richard Flood, Walter Robinson, Alan Moore, Bruce Adams, Robin Dodds, Claudia Gould, Edit DeAk & Duncan Smith, Deborah Bershad on Andres Serrano, Barbara Broughel on Barbara Bloom, Eric M. Jensen, Fred Wilson, Catherine Howe, Carlo McCormick, Mike Glier, Arnold Mesches, Robert Longo, Nayland Blake, Daniel Levine, Charles A. Wright, Jr., Chrysanthe Stathacos, Sara Kellner, Susan Hapgood & Cornelia Lauf, James Allen, Craig Centrié

71

Performance

Anthony Bannon on Robert Longo, Scott Rucker, David Kulik, Ronald Ehmke on Karen Finley, Tony Billoni, Stephen Gallagher, Mark C. Gorey on Mark Pauline, Mike Huber, Mark Anderson, Alex Gelencser, Richard Huntington on Fiona Templeton, David Butler, Ways In Being Gay, Steve Griffith, Holly Beye, *Tattoo You!*, *Beyond Ginger*

87

Music

David Kennedy, Juni Booth, Michael Colquhoun, James Emery, Jan Williams

91

Video

Chris Hill with Kathy High, Tony Conrad, Barbara Lattanzi, Laura McGough, Julia Scher, Julia Dzwonkoski

105

Film

Stephen Gallagher, Keith Sanborn, Coco Fusco with Martina Attilie & Isaac Julien, Ariel Dorfman, Andreas Wildfang, Jürgen Brüning, Jonathan Pollard, René Broussard, Matthew Schwonke, John S. Hall

113

Literature

R.D. Pohl, Andrew Côté on *Top Stories*, Edmund Cardoni on *Blatant Artifice*, Robert Creeley, Raymond Federman, Bruce Benderson, Ana Lydia Vega

119

Why is a Pedestal Better Than a Soapbox?

• The Alternative Space as Democratic Institution

Edmund Cardoni

119

20 Years of Political Art at Hallwalls: A Selective Chronology

129

Making Political Art, Making Art Political

Kevin Noble, George Howell, Kathe Burkhart, Babs Conant, Frank Moore, Emanuel Fried, Janet Sorenson, Charles A. Wright, Jr., Eugene Beltrami, Jr., Kevin J. Hosey, Tony Grajeda

135

Behind the Scenes: Staff Members Speak

Marion Ware, Linda Cathcart, Claudia Gould, Tony Billoni, Gary Nickard, Robin Dodds, Catherine Howe, Gail Nicholson, Alan Sondheim, Jody Lafond, Matthew Schwonke, Eileen Sullivan, Paul Dickinson, Maria Venuto, Killissa McGoldrick, Daniel A. Rigney III, Sara Kellner, Stephen Gallagher

147

One-Night Stands: Visiting Artists

Charles Clough, Michael Smith, Kathy High, Stuart Sherman, Tony Billoni, Komar & Melamid, Jeff McMahon, Stephen Gallagher on Ethyl Eichelberger, Catherine Howe, John Greyson, Michael Kaniecki, Jonas Dos Santos, Joe Gibbons, Bruce LaBruce, Chris Hill, Dale Hoyt, Ronald Ehmke, Assoto Saint, Nick Zedd

159

Close Encounters: Artist Residencies

Roger Welch & O.J. Simpson, Gayle Tufts & Yoshiko Chuma, Fiona Templeton, Rob Danielson & Terese Agnew, Ronald Ehmke on Mark Anderson & Ann Carlson, Vanessa Jones, Robbie McCauley, Carol Leigh/Scarlot Harlot, Bill Jungels & Elizabeth Licata on Border Art Workshop/*Taller de Arte Fronterizo*, Glenn Belverio

PART THREE: IN THE HEART OF THE CITY (MAKING A COMMUNITY)

171

City of No Illusions

Anthony Bannon, Mark Goldman, Charles Clough, Jonathon Welch, Debora Ott, Lorna C. Hill, Richard Huntington, James Griffin, Rebecca Howland, Anthony Chase on Robbie McCauley, *Downtown Depression/Suburban Horror* film festival, Dale Anderson, Stephen Pettitt & Andrew Porter on the *North American New Music Festival*, Keiko Sei, Anna Kaarina Nenonen, David Roche, Laura McGough, Rob Danielson, David Kulik, Dale Anderson on the *Artists & Models Affair*, Kevin J. Hosey, Roberley Bell, Matthew Isaac Schwonke, Julia Dzwonkoski, Aaron Lercher

187

School's Out: Art and the Academy

David Benders, Judy Treible, Michael Zwack, Charles Clough, Tony Conrad, Anthony Bannon & Cindy Sherman, Joseph Piccillo, John Maggiotto, Steve Swartz, Bruce Adams, Catherine Howe, Charles A. Wright, Jr.

193

Swimming in the Mainstream: Buffalo's Arts Establishment

Sandra H. Olsen, Douglas Schultz, Armand J. Castellani, Cecile & Steven Biltekoff, Fern Levin, Nina Freudenheim

199

Ways In: Gay Art, Gay Artists, Gay Audiences

Ronald Ehmke, Liz Lapovsky Kennedy, G. Roger Denson, Steve Gallagher, Tom Dooney on Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, Catherine Howe, Charles A. Wright, Jr., Miki Onodera, Liz Kotz, Edmund Cardoni, John Otto & caller, Bill Smartt & Mark Misrok, David Roche, Margaret Smith, Leah Zicari

PART FOUR: ALTERNATIVE HISTORIES (MAKING WAVES)

211

Alternative Space

Arlene Raven

217

Personal Histories

Keith Sanborn, Alfonso Volo, Richard Wicka, Annie Ferguson, Billy Fink, Tony Biloni, Henry Jesionka & Don Keller, Judith Jackson, Rosemary Lyons, Gary Judkins, Cheryl Jackson, Gail Nicholson

227

Making the Myth, Living the Legacy

Charles A. Wright, Jr., Carrie Rickey on *Hallwalls: Five Years*, Lee Eiferman, Robert Longo, Anthony Bannon, Cindy Sherman, 4 profiles of Longo & Sherman, Charles Clough, Diane Bertolo, Kevin Fix, Stephen Gallagher, Julie Zando, Kat Jurati & Alan Van Every, Fritz Bacher

237

Consider the Alternatives:

Rethinking the History, Mission, & Destiny of Alternative Spaces

William Zimmer, Michael Zwack & Elizabeth Licata, Charles A. Wright, Jr., Matthew Schwonke, Alan Sondheim, Isaac Julien & Martina Attille, Vanessa Jones, Homer Jackson, Daniel Levine, Chuck Agro, David Benders, Charlotta Kotik, Patrick O'Connell, Bill Besecker, Joseph Nechvatal

243

I Dream of Hallwalls

Richard Hayman, Miriam Stillerman, Paul Dickinson, Barbara Lattanzi, Alex Gelencser, Charles A. Wright, Jr., Sara Kellner, Richard Wicka, Daniel A. Rigney III, Ronald Ehmke

247

APPENDICES

Contexts & Coincidences: A History in Fragments

Alternatives Exhibition Checklist & Essay

Acknowledgements: Funders & Contributors

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK (HALLWALLS: A USER'S GUIDE)

RONALD EHMKE

HOW NOT TO READ THIS BOOK

In one of the many fine thrift stores which make Buffalo, New York a land of perpetual discovery, I once picked up a slender blue volume with an auspicious-sounding title. *For High Achievement* turned out to be Hooker Chemical's elegantly produced 1942 tribute to itself, celebrating an award the company had received from the government for its contributions to the field of chemical warfare during World War II. The book documents, in words and images, the plant, the award ceremony, and the "steaming turkey dinner, complete with cranberry sauce, relishes, and appropriate trimmings ... served by a group of Hooker girls" which followed. History has given every line of text an unintended new meaning, since readers now know that 36 years later the corporation would again receive national recognition, this time for its connection to a certain mishap downstream at Love Canal.

I thought of the self-congratulatory tone of that little book—and its creators' motives, and the unforeseen ironies the future would bring—when I was invited to edit this larger one: a collection of verbal and visual testaments to the first two decades of Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, not so far from Hooker's home base. Vanity publications are always a dubious undertaking, their glib tone erasing any trace of contradictory voices. The last thing I wanted to produce was a canonical account of an organization which has so rigorously questioned canons of all kinds, one which would smooth away all the kinks in Hallwalls' famously contentious nature.

I'm also wary of contributing to what I have come to think of as Anniversary Culture: the now-omnipresent practice of conceptualizing history as an endless progression of landmark events and inventions whose birthdays become occasions for vacuous pseudo-analysis.¹ D-Day, Earth Day, Superman, Spam: each is dutifully resurrected and reconstructed, its cultural significance upgraded for the current moment. In almost every case, the celebrated product or process is recalled in isolation, as if born in a vacuum. (It would have been very hard to tell from 1994's 25th anniversary recollections of Woodstock, the Stonewall Riots, and the lunar landing that these three events all took place during the same summer.) There's something inescapably defeatist about Anniversary Culture: a mix of millennial paranoia, post-modern suspicion that everything has already been said, and consumer taste for reruns, remixes, and reissues. As Tony Grajeda cautions in an essay in this publication, celebrating Hallwalls' first 20 years could be a way of surrendering to the possibility that its next 20 will be nothing to write home about. Or, as Julia Dzwonkoski asks elsewhere here: "Whose birthday is it, anyway? And who gets to blow out the candles?"

HOW THIS BOOK READS YOU

I envision two rather broad categories of readers for this book; for simplicity's sake I'll call them Insiders and Outsiders. (The cliquishness that dichotomy suggests is a recurring motif throughout these pages—though many commentators point out how easy it is to join the clique.) Insiders are those people already familiar with Hallwalls: the folks who built its first home on Essex Street in 1974 (or its second home at 700 Main Street in 1980, or its third one at 2495 Main in 1994), who exhibited visual art, presented films or videotapes, gave readings, staged concerts or performances there, served as paid staff or volunteers, or attended many of its exhibitions and events. Insiders, almost as a rule, tend to have very strong opinions about Hallwalls; for many of them it has become a surrogate family (see the chapter "Personal Histories" for evidence of this), and their feelings about the organization are understandably highly charged.

Outsiders know the place, if at all, by reputation only. They may be aware of Hallwalls as one of several artist-run alternative cultural organizations which sprang to life in the United States in the late '60s and early '70s, expanded significantly in the '80s, and continue to serve a vital function in the '90s despite an always-shaky economic climate. They may be familiar with the place for the role it has played in the ongoing development of visual art, film, video, literature, music, and performance over the last two decades. Or they may be intrigued by the lists of now-well-known artists in those fields who have presented their work at Hallwalls.

In assembling this volume, I have felt a responsibility to both potential audiences: to honor and celebrate the immense investments of time and energy made by countless individuals to keep the place going for so long, and at the same time to provide useful reference material for students and scholars of contemporary cultural history. The finished product therefore does double duty as a sourcebook and a scrapbook; in fact, the two functions are inseparable.

HOW TO WRITE THIS BOOK

Consider the Alternatives is emblematic of many projects to emerge from Hallwalls over the last 20 years. Indeed, in many ways the book mirrors the organization itself:

- 1) it is the collective product of many individuals working in uneasy alliance;
- 2) it exists in part because the current staff found funding for it, and in part because people simply felt like such a thing should exist;
- 3) it exemplifies a trend in the artworld at large (many art centers which emerged around the same time have produced or are currently preparing similar retrospectives);
- 4) it questions its own authority at every turn;
- 5) it started out small and got very big very fast.

The book I was initially contracted to produce was completely different from the one you now hold in your hands. Late in the summer of 1994 I was invited by members of the current staff to serve (with Edmund Cardoni, Sara Kellner, Barbara Lattanzi, and Elizabeth Licata) on an ad-hoc 20th Anniversary Publication committee, contribute a brief essay about the Performance program to a volume accompanying a retrospective show at the Burchfield-Penney Art Center; and to proofread seven other texts—one per programming area (Exhibitions, Film, Video, Literature, Music) plus two historical overviews—whose authors had already been contacted. A piece of cake.

But an awfully tiny piece of an awfully large cake, various people argued. (There's a lot of arguing in this saga, but don't take that too seriously; as you'll learn in this book, it wouldn't be Hallwalls without a yelling match or two. Tempers sometimes flare and egos often clash, primarily because the people who work there care passionately about the difficult business of presenting complex art and issues in a responsible fashion.) The framework was too simple, too linear, too limiting. Spirited debates emerged over how best to represent 20 years of activity by literally thousands of people in three markedly different locations: how could X, an Outsider, accurately represent a given program without direct knowledge of its inner workings? Conversely, wouldn't Insider Y's years in the trenches demolish any possibility of objectivity? Should the publication focus on Hallwalls' celebrated origins, or downplay the big names in favor of local artists for whom the gallery was not a brief launching pad but a permanent home?

Seeking to address these controversies and enlarge the book's scope, Barbara Lattanzi (Film Curator, 1981-83; Technical Director, 1983-87; Video Co-curator, 1987-91) and I then compiled a list of approximately 300 artists, audience members, staff, and others who had been intimately involved with the organization, particularly in its early years. (We never presumed to be comprehensive, and I apologize in advance to anyone who may have felt excluded from our quest; even in 280 pages, this book can only scratch the surface.) With much assistance from current and recently departed staff members, I tracked down as many of these people as I could and asked them to write a page or two about Hallwalls and its role in their lives. We asked contributors to be as detailed, opinionated, and ornery as possible, with the intention of creating a composite portrait of the organization through the eyes of the people who built it, maintained it, and made use of its resources. Open calls for additional submissions were posted in Hallwalls' monthly calendar and other art-related publications. The winter of 1994-95 was consequently full of suspense and surprise, as I waited to see what fresh treasures the mail, fax machine, and modem would bring each day. More than 100 replies eventually materialized (not all of which were used here; a complete list of their authors' names is included in an appendix), some recounting specific remembered moments in a paragraph or two, others contributing elegantly constructed theses on Hallwalls' evolution and related personal, political, and aesthetic concerns. Adding to this pool of resources were a collection of interviews (conducted by Elizabeth Licata, Anthony Bannon, and myself) with key figures from Hallwalls' past as well as representatives of other local organizations, and archival documents culled from various sources.

The initial motivation for collecting this material was to augment the existing framework of essays: to illustrate points made in the "anchor" texts, confirm or challenge assertions in the "official" record, and so on. But even this Talmudic system of glosses did not seem to do justice to the multi-focused, non-hierarchical nature of Hallwalls, so I elected to abandon the original structure altogether and allow the mass of new contributions to determine their own organic shape.

While I consulted as many anniversary publications by similar organizations as I could find, many of the models for this project came from outside the alternative gallery circuit. Among the most suggestive were Bill Berkson and Joe LeSueur's *Homage to Frank O'Hara*, an assemblage of anecdotes, creative writing, photographs, and drawings paying tribute to the late poet, for its impressionistic evocation of not just a single individual but his vast circuit of friends and associates, resulting in a lively chronicle of the cultural flavor of a specific place and time; Fred and Judy Vermorel's *Starlust: The Secret Fantasies of Fans*, a collection of letters, dreams, and interviews with rock fans which vividly demonstrates that the consumers of popular music play a far more active role in shaping the culture industry than most accounts admit (an approach I've attempted to

extend to another portion of that industry here); *Mondo 2000's User's Guide to the New Edge*, a hypertext-derived reworking of previously-printed material supplemented by new commentary; and Victor Bockris and Gerard Malanga's *Up-Tight: The Velvet Underground Story*, an oral history of the band, whose structure and layout are mimicked here in the chapter "Blame It on the Spaghetti," a composite portrait of Hallwalls' first five years incorporating information from approximately 30 different sources.

I was also inspired by performance artist Robbie McCauley's approach to collective tale-telling. In a series of theatrical works investigating race relations in various American cities (a project which started here in Buffalo, as McCauley writes in the "Close Encounters" chapter of this book), the writer/director and local cast members have interviewed witnesses to key historical events and then shaped their testimony into complex productions in which no single voice or viewpoint is given preference over any other. Accounts sometimes overlap, sometimes contradict each other; context is everything. McCauley's account of her working technique in a 1993 issue of *Theater* is particularly compelling in terms of the Hallwalls book:

Intimacy is more important than truth in theater. Who is telling the story is more important than truth. None of this means that truth is not important. It means that intimacy and presence are more important. One's willingness to speak makes the truth resonate.²

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

There are a number of different types of material in *Consider the Alternatives*: new texts written specifically for this occasion, reprinted passages from earlier books published by Hallwalls and others, excerpts from interviews, letters received by the organization, talk show transcripts, ephemera, and so on. These fragments have been arranged in a fashion which encourages browsing; each of the 27 individual chapters is more or less self-contained, its elements usually but not always arranged in chronological order.

But the book actually has a beginning, middle, and end—or several of each, to be more precise. If you start at the front and work your way to the back, you will find a number of loose narratives and thematic strands superimposed on one another. The main body of the text opens with "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," a collage of various Outsiders' first impressions of the organization from 1974 to 1990, and closes with "I Dream of Hallwalls," a similar montage of Insiders' dreams and nightmares, thus offering an extremely idiosyncratic "psycho-history," a journey deeper and deeper inward.

Along the way are four very different approaches to Hallwalls. Part One, "Print the Legend (Making History)," covers the origins and first 15 years of the gallery, moving from a pair of straightforward historical accounts by G. Roger Denson and Anthony Bannon (both of whom played important roles in Hallwalls' early days themselves) through a many-voiced retelling of the Essex Street period and ending up with a pair of subjective analyses by critic Richard Huntington and former curator Stephen Gallagher.

Part Two, "Programming (Making Work)" contains sections on each of Hallwalls' 6 major program areas. The collage-style chapters covering Exhibitions, Performance, Video, and Film all incorporate material from curators, featured artists, reviews, program notes, and other Hallwalls publications to trace significant shifts in direction over the course of two decades. These shifts—which include a greater interest in work made outside the United States, a deeper commitment to community-based projects, more conscious attention paid to the race, gender, and sexuality of artists and audiences—are hardly unique to Hallwalls. Indeed, I would argue that they are characteristic of the American artworld as a whole. (And yet the voice of a colleague from Los Angeles I met several years ago on a panel kept echoing in my mind as I compiled these chapters: "Everyone on the West Coast who reads Hallwalls' calendars thinks the place is a breeding ground of political correctness.") Certainly there are artists and audiences in Buffalo who feel that the organization has abandoned "real" art for "politics." Current Executive Director Edmund Cardoni takes up this charge in his essay, which is supplemented by a chapter of smaller pieces exploring the politicization of the art world.

One of the underlying tenets of this book is that aesthetic considerations are only one part of a complicated network of interconnected issues. To focus on individual works, as academic art history (along with film history, theater history, music history, and so on) tends to do, is to miss the way cultural production really operates in our society. Which artists get selected for exhibition or presentation? What factors enter into the curatorial process? What do audiences make of the work they see? And: where does the money come from? The last three chapters of Part Two look more closely at the *business* of presenting art from the perspectives of staff members and visiting artists. The concerns they raise—personal, economic, political, geographic, technological, and so on—shed light on what happens before paintings make their way onto gallery walls or the house lights go down.

Part Three, "In the Heart of the City (Making a Community)," is essentially a study of Hallwalls' complex relationship with its hometown. While generations of staffers have lamented the fact that the organization is better known internationally than it is locally, the collection of texts presented here demonstrates the lasting marks Hallwalls and Buffalo have left on each other. The art center has often looked to the city for subject matter, it has collaborated with several departments at the two SUNY schools and with other local cultural organizations, and it has provided careers and

cultural resources for many citizens. The chapter "Ways In: Gay Art, Gay Artists, Gay Audiences" is a case study of Hallwalls' constantly evolving relations with one particular "community"—to use that emptiest of buzzwords.

Part Four, "Alternative Histories (Making Waves)," moves farthest away from "objectivity" in order to chart the impact of Hallwalls—and, by extension, the non-profit art movement from which it grew—on individual lives. It begins, appropriately enough, with an essay by a writer who had never been to Hallwalls when she wrote it. Critic Arlene Raven—a co-founder of The Woman's Building in Los Angeles a year before Hallwalls was born—explores the concept of "alternative space" in its broadest possible sense. Raven's autobiographical methodology is continued by other contributors in "Personal Histories," while the themes she explores are further developed in a chapter on the uncertain future of artist-run organizations. Another chapter in this section, "Making the Myth, Living the Legacy," chronicles the emergence of an essentially imaginary Hallwalls when several of the organization's founders were thrust into international prominence: a fiction constructed partly by the media, and partly by the artists and later staff themselves.

Some of the material contained in Part Four may strike Outsiders as trivial or hermetic: "a private joke in a public place," to quote the title of a videotape Steve Griffith once produced and showed at Hallwalls. (Or was it "a public joke in a private place"? Like many writers here, I won't let historical accuracy get in my way.) I've included such writing because I'm convinced it provides an excellent illustration of the degree to which people have taken the institution to heart. For many artists and audience members, Hallwalls is not simply a place to see or present art, it's a school, a social circle, an adopted family.

Make that several circles, several families: readers unfamiliar with the place should keep in mind that lots of radically disparate activities happen at Hallwalls simultaneously, each with its own core audience. Visit the current location in the Tri-Main Center and you may well encounter a thematic exhibition and a solo show in the gallery, a local theater company rehearsing in the performance space, an animation festival screening across the hall, an Internet user or two sharing the Video Editing Suite with members of Dyke TV, a handful of volunteers preparing a bulk mailing of the new calendar in the lobby, and various staff members writing grant proposals for next season's programming in the office—all at the same time. Most of these groups operate with little if any knowledge of each other's existence; in a very real sense, Hallwalls means something completely different for each one of them. Moreover, the cast of characters tends to change fairly significantly every few years; the tenor and composition of the 1995 version of Hallwalls bears little resemblance to the 1985 or 1975 versions. Rest assured that a reference which strikes you as particularly obscure is likely to baffle the majority of other readers as well—and the indecipherability of the message is part of its meaning.

But Hallwalls is more than the sum of its factions; the stories retold here are not simply self-important exercises in nostalgia. While there are many ways in which Hallwalls is utterly unique (surely no other organization in the country attempts to juggle so many different disciplines), it is also part of a larger social and cultural force. I'm particularly struck by Arlene Raven's premise that the United States literally constitutes "alternative space": the implications of that disarmingly simple statement resound throughout these pages. Debora Ott speaks (in "City of No Illusions") of art organizations forging a truly American culture by providing a forum for previously unheard voices, and Gail Nicholson refers (in "Personal Histories") to the collective creation of "something greater" in the process. From its inception, Hallwalls has pushed buttons, provoked controversy, raised questions: a quality Tony Billoni reminds us (in "Behind the Scenes") is the essence of democracy. This publication perpetuates that tradition.

WHO TO THANK FOR MAKING THIS BOOK READABLE

As I've indicated above, *Consider the Alternatives* reflects the work of many, many people. Elizabeth Licata, Edmund Cardoni, and Sara Kellner all provided much help early on by retyping contributions not submitted in digital form. (This was surely the least of their efforts, but it was crucial nonetheless.) Sara spearheaded fundraising for all the 20th anniversary activities—not just this book but the retrospective exhibition at the Burchfield-Penney and an accompanying show at Hallwalls itself—and did a wonderful job of keeping things running as quickly and efficiently as possible. She also recruited—and later assisted—Mathieu Victor for the formidable task of scanning all the illustrations for this publication.

Elizabeth Licata volunteered extraordinary amounts of her time (over and above her duties as co-curator of the Burchfield-Penney show and author of an insightful essay on the Exhibitions program) conducting interviews (fragments of which are scattered throughout the book), researching the programming information for the timeline, filling in the framework I provided for many of the book's chapters, and providing initial drafts of introductions for several of these. While I eventually revamped all the chapters she started except "Swimming in the Mainstream"—which is almost entirely her work from conception to execution—Elizabeth's sensibility pervades the text as a whole. I also benefitted immensely from her feedback (and that of Barbara Lattanzi and Chris Hill) on the project's emerging shape and final contents. *Consider the Alternatives* would not have been the same without her.

Edmund Cardoni, who introduced me to Hallwalls when we were both carefree grad student culture consumers nearly a decade and a half ago, is now the organization's Executive Director—following in the footsteps of Robert Longo, Charles Clough, Patrick O'Connell, John Maggiotto, Bill Currie, and Christine Tebes. His relentless dedication has kept the doors open during an extraordinarily difficult period; he is surely one of the primary reasons Hallwalls has lived to see its 20th birthday. In the midst of his administrative responsibilities, Ed somehow found time to proofread this

book, and in the process became its first audience. His ongoing faith in my slightly deranged mission to triple the size of the project (in terms of both page count and completion time, not to mention printing costs) and his enthusiasm for the end result have been inspirational.

Paul Szpakowski has done a wonderful job fashioning a visual style to match the text's patchwork construction. Given his own lengthy history with Hallwalls as both a performer and a designer, I was delighted to have one last opportunity to collaborate with him, and I have appreciated his patience and good humor in the face of endless delays. My friend and artistic partner Margaret Smith shifted from Outsider to Insider during the course of this project; in her present role as Hallwalls' Director of Development & Public Relations she has done a number of things to help get this book off my hard drive and onto the streets, and for that I will always be in her debt.

Mike Basinski, whose own history with Hallwalls as performer and audience member stretches back to the late '70s, is now responsible for maintaining the organization's archives at the Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University Libraries at SUNY Buffalo, and he gave me open access to that material. The photographs, posters, and other ephemera reproduced here are merely the tip of the proverbial iceberg awaiting future researchers.

While I've been an audience member since 1982 and was a staffer from 1986-94, I have no direct knowledge of Hallwalls' first incarnation on Essex Street. One of the fringe benefits of this project was the opportunity it gave me to talk with folks who were around in those fabled early days—including Diane Bertolo, Tony Billoni, Linda Brooks, Roger Denson, Lee Eiferman, Joe Hryvniak, Kathy High, Gary Judkins, Dave Kulik, Deb Lary, Scott Rucker, and Judy Treible. Although I've never met many of them face to face, they took the time to answer my questions, point my research in new directions, and deepen my understanding of Hallwalls. In the course of assembling this book, I developed an immense respect for them—along with Charles Clough, Robert Longo, and the dozens of other "co-conspirators" you will meet in these pages—for envisioning new means of making and presenting art. Their ability to consider alternatives has proved so powerful that it persists to this day: a high achievement indeed. This book is a tribute to them all.

NOTES

¹ Ronald Ehmke, "Dawn of the Dead: The Art and Literature of the Shopping Mall, Part 2," *The Squealer*, Summer 1992, pp. 15-17.

² Robbie McCauley, "Mississippi Freedom: South and North," *Theater*, Volume 24, No. 2, 1993, p. 90.

RONALD EHMKE (editor) is a writer whose work has appeared in *Artpapers*, *High Performance*, *The New Orleans Review*, *The Buffalo News*, and many other publications around the country. He made his Hallwalls debut in 1983 and staged a number of solo and collaborative performances there in the intervening years, in addition to appearances in New York City, Toronto, Houston, New Orleans, and other cities. He served as curator of Hallwalls' performance program from 1986-94, an experience which inspired his recent monologue *Not for Profit: A Personal History of Peripheral Art, 1972-92*. Ehmke is believed to be the only former Hallwalls staff member to be mentioned in both a journal devoted to Edmund Spenser and *Tattoo Savage Magazine*.

ELIZABETH LICATA (assistant editor) is a writer and curator based in Buffalo who co-organized (with Sara Kellner) the exhibition *Alternatives: 20 Years of Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center* (April 8-June 18, 1995) for the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Over the past eight years she has written about visual art, video, and performance—frequently covering Hallwalls events—for such publications as *High Performance*, *ARTFORUM*, *Art in America*, *Art & Antiques*, *The New Art Examiner*, *ARTnews*, *The Independent*, *Afterimage*, and *The Buffalo News*. Licata has also participated in Hallwalls programming as a performer, appearing as a New Age academic in 1989's *Sardonic Divergence* performance marathon and presenting her version of a virtual Hallwalls at a 1994 benefit for the new Tri-Main space. Currently she is exhibitions curator at the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, where she also teaches a course on contemporary art history.

PAUL SZPAKOWSKI (designer) has been involved with Hallwalls since 1977, first as a performer (solo and with such bands as Hot Cha Cha and the legendary George), and later as a graphic designer. His work on the organization's monthly calendar, posters for film and video series, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and publications including *Reviewing Histories: Selections from New Latin American Cinema* [1987] and *Berlin: Images in Progress* [1989] provided Hallwalls with a distinctive visual style. Szpakowski's other graphic work includes posters and CD covers for bands including *Them Jazzbeards*, as well as illustration.

THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

DON METZ:

WORLD'S LONGEST HAPPY HOUR (1974)

I remember walking into Charlie Clough's studio. I think it was sometime in the morning; I had just completed three hours of practicing Ponce and Villa-Lobos preludes. [Michael] Zwack needed a ride to Essex Street, and I knew he would have a Ballantine Pale Ale, so I picked him up. (In those days there was nothing like a Pale Ale to start the day.) Charlie and Zwack talked about painting and about some lady who told them they could start a gallery, and I thought, "I don't give a fuck." I wanted my ale and to get to school.

Some guy came in who said he wanted me to play bass in his opera. I couldn't play bass for shit, but he said Mulligan's was open, so I went with him and gave him some bullshit so he would buy the beer. I left Mulligan's, went to school, got married to a beautiful woman, had two great kids, worked with some of the greatest composers and musicians in the world, and made some wonderful friends. Twenty years later, after constructing Hallwalls #3, I still don't give a fuck.

Composer/guitarist Don Metz was employed by Hallwalls (as Music programmer, 1982-95) longer than any other staff member in the organization's history. He was recently named Administrative Director of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center.



Visiting artist Les Levine, Apr. 8, 1980
(see text by Kathy High)

BRUCE ADAMS: A CLIQUE WITH OPEN ARMS (circa 1977)

My earliest perception of Hallwalls was as a place where fringe art was produced and exhibited by fringe people with attitudes. It was easy to dismiss as a product of aesthetically confused egos. I once asked Roger Denson if he was aware that there was an image of Hallwalls within the art community as being dominated by a clique of elitist insiders. His answer was simple and insightful: "It *is* a clique, so just join it." I did. Without the benefit of being particularly elite, I eventually helped to establish the Artists Advisory Board, and today serve on Hallwalls' board of directors.

A clique is a narrowly defined group of people, held together by a common interest or purpose. Hallwalls fits that description. The interest that binds a clique is often selfish, and here, too, many of the people associated with Hallwalls over the years (myself included) were and are largely motivated by the self-serving cause of bringing to Buffalo emerging art which they wanted to see. If not for this selfish interest, the talented and highly qualified staff would not remain in such underpaid and demanding jobs. Fortunately, we all benefit.

A clique is also exclusive, and so is Hallwalls, but only through the process of self-exclusion. Many people exclude themselves for lack of interest, as the world of mass-marketed pop culture limits Hallwalls' appeal to a relatively select group. Some bar themselves, deeming the organization unreceptive, a priori. But those curious enough discover a clique with open arms.

Bruce Adams is a visual artist who teaches at Buffalo State College.

DONNA JORDAN DUSEL:
A SMALL CIRCLE OF FRIENDS (1978)

I first went to Hallwalls in 1978. I was a graduate student (studying photography) at UB at the time. I went over to the old Essex Street location with my friend Jon Ulrich, who knew everybody at both Hallwalls and CEPA, as he had worked for the old Delaware Camera Mart. It was a cold, snowy, dark, wet, absolutely horrible winter day. The Essex Street complex was cold—and, I thought, a bit shabby—but the dedication of the students who ran literally everything over there was overwhelming. The very early Hallwalls with its tiny hallway space was the most “New York”-like gallery that Buffalo had to offer. I think at first (especially since I was only about 26 years old at the time), I was very enamored with the entire complex. I wanted to somehow participate in something artistic over there.

The first thing I did was to enroll in a printing course taught by a free-lance printer, Ann Rosen, who rented a leaky (to say the least) studio right next to Hallwalls. I was introduced to Ann by Jan Sutcliffe, a photographer, who worked for Delaware Camera at the time. Jan was living with Scott Rucker, who coincidentally was a teaching assistant in my photography program at UB. Scott and Ellen Carey were both teaching assistants under Tyrone Georgiou at UB. Ann Rosen—this is really starting to sound like a soap, isn't it?—was living with Jerry Einstandig, who still operates Octobergraphics.

Coincidentally, I had already known Jerry for a few years, as he was the main printer for the Buffalo Museum of Science, where I had worked from 1974–1977. Small town, this Buffalo is...

I found that, between Hallwalls and CEPA, nearly everyone I met knew everyone else in town. Jon knew Biff Henrich, who knew Gary and Chris Nickard. I met Gary and Chris at Delaware Camera, where they both worked, too. Gary eventually became director of CEPA, along with Biff. Gary and his future wife, Patty Wallace, were also good friends of Jan and Scott's. Jan and Scott had parties; everyone was there.

Ann Rosen's printing class was boring and very messy. We (the class—all five of us) would be in that leaky, cold studio until three o'clock in the morning, scraping ink off rollers on the printing press. The smell of that ink—I think I can still remember what that inky place smelled like. The plastic ceiling of our “classroom” leaked, the stove/heater smelled, and occasionally it singed our legs. We froze our butts off in there! However, the good news, the reason any of us stayed in that class, was obviously the people, many of whom have become life-long friends.

Donna Jordan Dusel is a photographer who has exhibited work at both Hallwalls and CEPA. She now lives in Orchard Park, NY.

JODY LAFOND:
MARY TYLER MOORE MEETS THE KIPPER KIDS
(1979)



The two Harry Kippers, Oct. 8, 1979. Photo: Ann Rosen

I was living with Susan Clements; we called it “The Winter of No Friends.” We'd watch *Mary Tyler Moore* reruns five times a day; we thought Mary had such a great life! I was trying to expand my social horizons, so when I saw a preview of this performance by the Kipper Kids in the paper, it seemed like a wild, exotic thing to do. Then I realized the place was on Essex Street, basically around the corner from us.

I showed up late because I was trying to decide what to wear. Then I stood in the courtyard asking myself, “Do I *really* wanna do this?” I went alone, which was pretty brave. The show was already going on when I walked in. It was a full house—probably a hundred people, at least. So I slinked in and stood against the wall.

I don't remember much about the performance, except for these little bags of shit on the Kippers' backs, which they cut open with razorblades. Bill Currie came up to me—I think he could tell I didn't belong there. I must have looked really scared, because he helped me find a seat. I watched the show and then left really quickly when it was over. I didn't see anybody I knew, but then again it *was* the Winter of No Friends.

Jody Lafond eventually expanded her social horizons and became a video artist, presenting work at Hallwalls and other media centers throughout the United States.

MICHAEL BASINSKI: VISITATION (circa 1979)

During the whole of a full, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone in my green Cutlass, through a singularly dreary tract of suburbia and into Buffalo; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of Hallways. I was much prepared to enter. I had learned about yogurt from the parodies of the Beat Generation in *Mad* magazine. Yogurt was not then the stuff of berries and cherries and kiwi. Oh no! One had to be a genuine Rimbaudian bohemian to acquire the artistic pallet that demanded plain, biting sour, almost painful, unflavored yogurt. I found some at the ACME supermarket, and spending my unspent lunch money I owned yogurt. I heard that ACME was secretly owned by the Amish and was pleased that the Amish carried artistic food. And here I was decades later driving around in circles looking for a (art) space in which to park and about to enter Hallways to become Jack Kerouac and Henry Murger. Over the barricades into the Paris Commune. This was the moon.

Costumed in vestiges of my proletarian (red) roots: old jeans and brogans with steel tips, I was attending a concert of New Music. I might find the love of my life, I thought, pausing and then passing this massive reclining statue of a naked nude Venus woman in a birthing pose. I was being born, which reminded me that this was art, an art gallery, an art space. My lust was squash. I could feel the waves pounding, fists and rulers, a decade of barbarism which I endured under the schoolage of the cruel and merciless Felician nuns. But I maintained the splendor of my virgin pagany and with a white rabbit squirted out of the mundane through a door.

A long white wide room hall. Some small (mod) art hung on either side and on the smaller back wall. 1970-something. Some guy playing an instrument, some instrument. John Neumann? And to the left a small white room, cement floor, within two more musicians and a tape recorder playing something stretched and scratchy, poisoned and orgasmic. Tim Wojic? And it was Don Metz. Don Metz invented Hallwalls, or so he told me. The rabbit then ducked into another room. Metz stepped out of his performance. It was his piece *Red*. Then we had two beers each and he stepped back into the performance. And the performance went on towards eternity.

In another room was another musician or two and the room was seemingly unfinished and partially unlit. The art space stopped but the space continued. As I recall it went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that I had not a moment to think about stopping myself before I found myself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or I fell very slowly, for I had plenty of time as I went down to look about, and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, I tried to look down and make out what I was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything. Then I looked at the sides of the well and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and bookshelves: here and there I saw maps and abstract art hung upon pegs. I took down a bottle from one of the shelves as I passed; it was labeled "MOGEN DAVID" but to my disappointment it was empty. I figured it belonged to Metz.

Down, down, down. Would the fall *never* come to an end? From another shelf I grabbed something labeled "apple." It was an apple. There fell from the sky a mystical rain of roses. And the new-born Venus fresh risen from the sea is blown to the shore by the winds of spring.

Performance poet Michael Basinski is a member of the New Music ensemble EBMA. In his capacity as Assistant Curator at the Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University Libraries at SUNY Buffalo, he now oversees the Hallwalls and CEPA archives.

KATHY HIGH: BIG MOUTHS ALL TALKING AT ONCE (1980)

One of the first video exhibitions I can remember seeing was work by Les Levine. All I can remember of the screening is pictures of big mouths on the monitors all talking at once. I was standing in the back of the exhibition space at the "Ice House." It was always really cold in there, and I could never get comfortable. Over everyone's heads, I remember watching these two screens playing images of giant mouths that gossiped, whispered and echoed fears and desires in the dark. Somehow I am sure it is bigger in my head than it was in real life. It was something so simple, so immediate and intimate that it moved me to look only at people's mouths for weeks.

Video artist Kathy High curated film and video at Hallwalls from 1980-1984. She is currently the editor of the New York-based media journal Felix.

**AMY CAPPELLAZZO:
LOTTO AS METAPHOR (1982)**

I always say, "If it weren't for art, I probably would have turned to crime." To some degree, I owe this preventative reform to Hallwalls.

I was one of those restless suburban girls, from Tonawanda to be exact, and having already memorized the floor plan of the Boulevard Mall, my only other forms of enlightenment came from creative prank calls or doing doughnuts in icy parking lots. I was certain my reckless desire for petty shoplifting and graffiti-ing bathroom walls would only escalate into more serious crimes until I discovered the Elmwood Avenue of the early 1980s, and eventually Hallwalls.

I remember my first visit to Hallwalls. My boyfriend at the time, Brian Szpakowski, his brother Paul, and I drove downtown for an evening opening. It was the Members Show, and we stopped first at Mr. Goodbar for a Genny on tap (25 cents). When I arrived, I was swiftly transported to a state of mind and being I had never experienced. I was literally high. I suppose I would liken the feeling, as I paused from piece to piece, to that incredible lottery-ticket high a serious gambler feels. Every image I saw that night—naturally I was not too discerning at the time—was a winning number.

Amy Cappellazzo now lives in Miami, Florida, where she works in the Cultural Affairs Department of Miami-Dade Community College.

**RONALD EHMKE:
BLONDE ON A BUM TRIP (1983)**

I'm kind of hazy about my first visit to Hallwalls, maybe because the trip itself was very hazy. Mark Koch and Ed Cardoni, my newfound grad school friends, said that Jackson MacLow was doing a reading downtown, so we drove to this completely deserted part of town, the streets of which were torn up so badly that the whole area looked like a war zone. This was, of course, the era when the subway was being built, the subway which marked "the dawn of a new era in transportation," the subway which was going to transform Buffalo into a thriving metropolis again, despite the fact that the steel mill had just shut down and the *Courier-Express* had gone out of business and the world's largest manufacturer of windshield wiper blades was packing it in and heading for Mexico. We walked through the rubble, across wooden plank bridges and into a non-descript office building, got into an elevator and emerged in a completely different space.

In retrospect, this all seems very much like that scene in drug scare movies when Nancy, the innocent freshman, is taken to her first hippie party, and somebody

gives her a hit of acid, and five minutes later she's on her fifteenth trip and she's jumping out a window. I was mystified that this incredibly trendy art gallery was somehow tucked into a totally mundane office building—as if it was some rip in the time-space continuum—and I was pretty sure I would never be able to find the place again by myself. I don't remember much about the reading; it was a lot of syllables, a lot of pieces of words—mostly vowels—very few whole words. The air was thick with the aroma of clove cigarettes; every single person in the room (except my friends and I) was wearing black from head to toe, with little flashes of white for accent.

Many years later I was describing all of this to a fellow staff member, who immediately pointed out that I hadn't been at Hallwalls at all; the reading must have been at CEPA. Not until I had three or four paychecks in my wallet did I begin to grasp the Golden Rule of 700 Main Street: THE WHITE WALLS ARE HALLWALLS, THE GRAY WALLS ARE CEPA.

Adapted from Not for Profit: A Personal History of Peripheral Art, 1972-92.

**ANONYMOUS: GRANDMA AND THE
EIGHT-FOOT PENIS (circa 1988)**

Excerpted from The John Otto Show, WGR Radio, November 1, 1990:

Caller: Hey, listen, I happened to be there [at Hallwalls] by accident one time. I didn't know what Hallwalls was about. For a long time it was kind of an undercover sort of thing, I suppose, because I never heard of it, and I used to be downtown a lot! But one day I just happened to be in there by accident, a proud grandma going to see her talented grandson in a recital down in the basement, and while we were waiting, we had a little time, I thought my daughter and I would walk around. Well, I walked around, all right! I had no idea what I was looking at; I looked up at the wall and there was this eight-foot penis there, a picture! I almost died!

John Otto: Oh, a *picture*. I was going to say, had you met one of the individuals in charge... But no, it was a photograph—

Caller: —It was a PAINTING.

Otto: A painting?

Caller: Yeah.

Otto: [sarcastic] Representation.

Caller: I almost died. Let me tell you, I made a beeline outta there! But I had no idea what it was. And I do resent my tax money going to, to, uh, perform this kind of stuff.

**MATTHEW SCHWONKE:
Q&A (1990)**

One of the first events I went to was a screening of *The Deadman*, a film by Peggy Ahwesh and Keith Sanborn. Paul Sharits walked in late, because he'd been at home taping something on MTV featuring Julie Brown ("the white one," he clarified). Jürgen [Brüning] introduced Peggy after the film was over, and she took questions from the audience. Somehow the discussion came around to another film by Stan Brakhage, something about a naked man and woman having sex, and from the audience Paul broke in: "That was me in that movie! That was my wife and me!"

I left before the second half of the bill, Richard Kern's *Fingered*, and Paul was disappointed that I wasn't staying for "the most disgusting movie ever made."

Matthew Schwonke later became Hallwalls' Film Curator. He has still never seen Fingered.

PART ONE PRINT THE LEGEND (Making History)



The courtyard at 30 Essex Street, 1975.

"Hallwalls was the training ground. The city was ready. The timing was right. The building was there. And the people were smart and hungry."

-Robert Longo, statement for Hallwalls: 5 Years catalogue, 1980

from BUFFALO: OUTPOST OF THE POSTMODERN (A SPONTANEOUS GENERATION)

G. ROGER DENSON

It should come as no surprise that Buffalo is a breeding ground for ideas. Unfortunately, to many people it is a surprise. *If* they find out. As true today as when it was *Queen City of the Great Lakes*, Buffalo prospers culturally from its unique location as hub to a ring of larger, more geopolitically strategic cities like Chicago, Toronto, Montreal, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, and New York. Still, like most cities of a moderate size, Buffalo's cultural contributions are largely overlooked by international taste-makers.

Cycles of cultural productivity perpetually wax and wane in civilization, but, arguably, cities the size of Buffalo (population 400,000 in 1975) often endure longer creative droughts than do larger urban centers. Perhaps for this reason, bursts of artistic activity seem more exciting to their populations, often reviving their dormant and fragmented intelligentsia with heady doses of brilliance. Unfortunately, for the smaller cities like Buffalo, many creative minds prefer to live in dazzling international centers. They leave the smaller city after being raised in it or after coming to teach in its universities for a few semesters, perpetuating a situation as old as civilization—one by which the great cities of the world are edified and bolstered.

Seen from this vantage point, an account of the cultural exchange between Buffalo and other international centers from 1975 to 1980 can be appreciated as a model for a greater historic circumstance: for it repeats a perpetual narrative describing the means by which any moderately sized city—in any nation or time—is both parent and host to ideas that, by necessity and attraction, expand beyond that city's borders and influence. That Buffalo frequently loses its creative manpower to more beguiling rivals is understandable; after all, historically Mycenae could not compete culturally with Athens, Chartres with Paris, or Naples with Rome. Nonetheless, history notes the singular accomplishments of Mycenae, Chartres, and Naples while acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between the smaller cities and the larger metropolitan centers: for great cities cannot grow with-

out the economic, material, and cultural sustenance provided by smaller, surrounding populations.

Although cities like Buffalo cannot be credited with spawning the diverse ideas and activities that now culturally dominate the West under the rubric *postmodernism*, Buffalo did contribute significantly to the nurturing and spread of postmodernism in America, particularly in the visual arts, the electronic arts, and the independent cinema. It was a contribution shared with dozens of other moderate-sized cities around the U.S. and Canada. Modernism had already passed many severe tests and its ideals were now openly embraced by major museums and taught in the most prestigious academies of the West. Increasingly, it appeared that the artists who perpetuated the modernist canon of taste would no longer be the challengers of established orders, as they were now very much a part of the order to be challenged. Cubism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Minimalism were gracing the halls, walls, and gardens of private and corporate collections in every major economic center. This shifting state of affairs nullified the modernists' attempts to subvert bourgeois culture. The artists of the avant-garde had never anticipated that they would be subsumed by a consumer culture comprising a post-industrial civilization. How could they? They lived in industrially advancing societies where the affluent and working classes were separated by stark differences in education, with the consequence that orthodoxy was followed more than questioned. They could not foresee a pluralistic culture where higher education would not be subject exclusively to privilege and where experimentation would not only be the rule but would be subsidized by the state.

By 1975, Western society had changed radically. Cultural experimentation had become the norm and it was now widely held that artists had expanded the formal boundaries of art as far as possible. Consequently artists began paying less attention to the formal innovations that had dominated modernism and concentrated

more upon the social and political effects various formal manipulations might have. The 1970s became a period when artists, filmmakers, performers, and writers would valiantly try to decentralize the power and economic structure of the arts. They took art out of the commercial gallery and acquisitive museum and brought it directly to the people in the streets. Some tried to redirect art back into the cosmos which inspired it by engineering the earth and technologically channeling the forces of nature.

Similarly, filmmakers and video artists divorced themselves from profit-venture studios in greater numbers to independently produce and distribute their own films and videotapes. Encouraged by the proliferation of liberal arts programs in higher education and the greater availability of equipment, more students pursued careers in media arts. The Vietnamese War was raging overseas as well as on the campuses and streets of the U.S. War had become a daily spectacle in our homes. It was only natural, then, that mass protests and street performance would inspire many actors and dancers to work without the prosceniums and stages of conventional theaters and without the scripts or choreography of commercial productions in order that they might, instead, improvise political performances on the pavement, steps, and grass of public parks and plazas that were relevant to the moment. By the late 1970s, the arts were actively engaged in a widespread political expansion beyond conventional boundaries and commercial venues and they were made even more dissident by an infusion of feminism, multiculturalism, gay activism, and gender bending. It was in keeping with the democratic ideal that artists and performers worked to establish a national and international network of production designed to subvert the hegemony of any one market or academic canon of taste.

With the close of the war and the availability of new funds earmarked for cultural development, artists became more focused on the alternative space. The National Endowment for the Arts began funding artist-run spaces from its Workshop Program in 1972. In that first year, only a handful applied and received grants. By 1976, however, over one-hundred alternative spaces had applied for the half-million dollars available. (This figure pertains only to funding for the visual arts and does not reflect funds also earmarked

for film, video, or performance arts.)

The alternative space, whether spatially or temporally acclimated (and very often it was both), posed as a foil to the marketing, distribution, acquisitions, and restrictions of the established museums, theaters, cinema, and galleries by being a dynamic and transient organism that refused to define itself in conventional terms. Yet most alternative spaces hosted exhibits, lectures, readings, screenings, and performances as might any one of these facilities—though their artists were not part of the mainstream, and their staffs initially worked on a volunteer basis. Moreover, large cities like New York were not the only ones to nurture the alternative space. One reason the dematerialization of art became so important in the 1960s was because new, faster modes of transportation had facilitated artists who desired to personally spread their ideas by traveling around the world. Simultaneously, artists from around the U.S. and Canada increasingly resented having to leave their homes and families to move to New York without guarantee of success. Many artists established power bases in their home towns where they could both exhibit their own work and host exhibits by renowned artists who wished to disseminate their ideas outside the international centers.

From 1975 to 1979, it looked as though artists had actually succeeded in expanding the power structures of art (though we would later learn this wasn't the complete truth). Eventually the alternative space would become a source for commercial and institutional success—Cindy Sherman, David Salle, Eric Bogosian, Laurie Anderson, and Kathryn Bigelow (all of whom presented relatively early works at Hallwalls) are only a handful of highly publicized artists to have found commercial opportunities with the help of alternative facilities and funding—just as the organizations themselves would often burgeon into multi-staffed, state-subsidized institutions. But during those years the alternative space was divorced from, if not hostile to, the mainstream venues of art, theater, music, and cinema.

In 1974, the Buffalo cognoscenti rightfully regarded the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and the Buffalo Philharmonic as its premiere cultural beacons. Since the late 1950s, the Albright-Knox could boldly boast of keeping pace with contemporary movements in painting and sculpture by maintaining one of the top collections

of modern art in North America. Similarly, successive music directors Lukas Foss and Michael Tilson-Thomas introduced the Buffalo Philharmonic and its audience to the most internationally renowned atonal compositions of the era. But in the 1970s, both organizations fell out of step, for the significant art and music of the period primarily became anti-institutional, anti-object, anti-orchestral, and was intentionally ill-suited for permanent collections or conventional instruments.

The young Buffalo artists felt an urgent need to inaugurate havens where conceptual art, performance art, and new music could proceed, where they could invite artists from around the U.S., Canada, and Europe to install, create, perform, screen, or discuss their work, and where they might demolish the walls, cover the floors with earth, or set fire to their equipment if the need arose (and it invariably did). With such requirements, it was only natural that the artists and musicians concerned with high innovation would aim their hostilities toward the Albright-Knox and the Buffalo Philharmonic—paragons of the cultural past—for this hostility would help define their sense of what art should be and provide the impetus for its organization.

In retrospect, the art and gestures demanding new venues in the 1970s still seem brazen. Although works by significant artists of the time, like those of Vito Acconci, Lynda Benglis, Chris Burden, and Carolee Schneeman, are now discussed by art historians or exhibited in public collections, some of their provocative works still elicit a malaise prohibiting easy assimilation in the museum or history book. In today's neo-conservative climate of public art funding, it is reasonable to doubt that a museum would attempt to depict documents or restage art like that made by Acconci, in which the artist, nude, dresses his penis. Similarly, it would not resurrect the full page ad taken out by Benglis in *Artforum*, in which the artist, also nude, vulgarly brandishes a dildo. We might never again expect to see performances by Burden, in which he is crucified—nails through his hands—to the roof of a Volkswagen, or in which Schneeman reads a feminist poem from a scroll unrolled from her vagina. This was a powerful art that vigorously demanded public response at a time when even subtle conceptual and media art had difficulty finding public outlets.

Thus, the demand to express diverse, postmodern world views in highly ingenious, if politicized and scan-

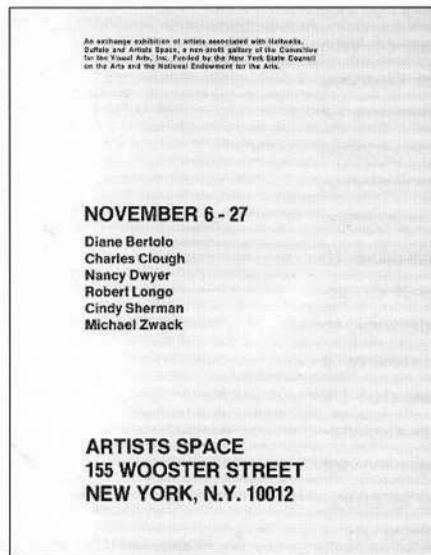
dalous, ways yielded in Buffalo to the proliferation of four alternate venues: Hallwalls, Media Study/Buffalo, CEPA (Center for Exploratory and Perceptual Arts), and Creative Associates. Between the four organizations, no postmodern stone remained unturned in terms of the painting, sculpture, photography, performance art, film, video, dance, new music, and literary expression. And anything too grandiose or costly for these organizations was suitable for the newly organized Artpark, the outdoor preserve dedicated to the arts and located on a former industrial spoils site overlooking the majestic Niagara Gorge in nearby Lewiston.

The beginning of 1975 saw Buffalo waging a full scale war against staid conventionalism in the arts. Most amazing of all was that not only did the five separate organizations co-sponsor alternative art forms in a spirit of camaraderie, but they also participated regularly in a much larger network of alternative spaces, parks, and performance organizations throughout North America. It wasn't long before the Albright-Knox joined forces with them. Buffalo's artistic community was about to embark on what might arguably be its most culturally invigorating epoch to date.

G. Roger Denson was co-Program Director at Hallwalls from 1978-1980 and Exhibitions Director and Curator from 1980-82. Currently writing art and cultural criticism and theory, he has had feature articles and reviews published in Art In America, Parkett, Arts, Artscribe, Flash Art, Contemporanea, Bijutso Techo, and Journal Of Contemporary Art. He has just finished two books of criticism, Migrations Of The Real And The Ideal, and Mainstream Mythopoesis: Complexity And Dissent In Popular Culture.



Robert Longo with Woody and Steina Vasulka, ca. 1976.



Artists Space exchange show, 1976.

1974-78: THE EARLY YEARS

ANTHONY BANNON

Hallwalls was established in 1974 in an old ice packing warehouse at 30 Essex Street that had been taken over by a Buffalo artist and activist, Larry Griffis, for use as studios and living spaces for artists, operating as the Ashford Hollow Foundation. Robert Longo, a student at State University College at Buffalo (commonly referred to as Buffalo State College), and Charles Clough, who sat in on classes at the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB), decided to turn the walls in the corridor between their studios into a gallery; thus, Hallwalls. And then they moved out, into a larger communal space in the complex, and the gallery expanded into their rooms.

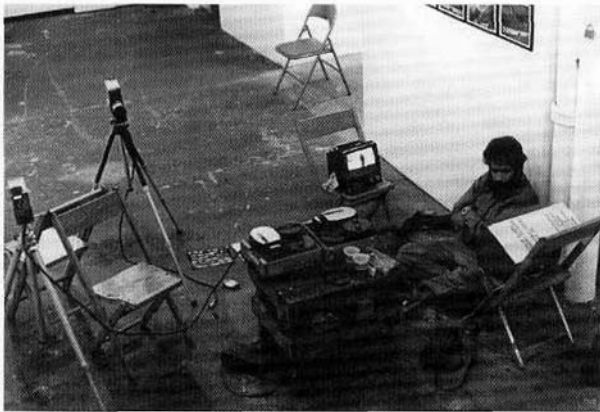
They moved at a good time. Both the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts had recently established categories for the support of artist-operated visual arts spaces. In 1971, Artists Space and 112 Greene Street opened in New York City, followed in the next few years by the Kitchen, Franklin Furnace, the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, P.S. 1 in Long Island City, the Clocktower, and the Center for New Art Activities, which published *Avalanche*. Outside of New York, spaces such as the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, La Mamelie in San Francisco, Washington (D.C.) Project for the Arts, Boston Visual Artists Union, N.A.M.E. Gallery in Chicago, and A Space in Toronto were established.

The Hallwalls staff made it a point to stay in touch with many of these new, artist-run organizations. "One of Hallwalls' main objectives is the establishment and maintenance of effective lines of communications between art centers. This will inform artists of recent developments outside those covered by the arts journals, allow for coordination and possible co-sponsorship of visiting artists and critics, and provide assistance for organizational problems that develop," declared an article entitled "The Network" in the first (and only) issue of Hallwalls' newsletter, issued in September 1975, which then went on to spell out specific personal contacts at other organizations throughout North America, ranging from Edit de Ak at Artists Space to "Mister

Peanut" at the Western Front in Vancouver.¹

In Buffalo, similar hothouses of artistic growth had just been established, and Hallwalls promised connections with these organizations as well. The Center for the Creative and Performing Arts, a locus for young performance and music artists, who were called Creative Associates, developed at the University at Buffalo, led by professors Lukas Foss, Lejaren Hiller, and Morton Feldman. The American Contemporary Theater, led by a former Creative Associate, Joseph Dunn, originated vigorously experimental performance events in the old Pierce-Arrow factory near Buffalo State College. Media Study/Buffalo, the public arm of UB's Center for Media Study (whose faculty included James Blue, Tony Conrad, Hollis Frampton, Paul Sharits, and Woody and Steina Vasulka) offered a city site for access to equipment and programming for film, video and electronic sound. The Center for Exploratory and Perceptual Arts (CEPA) focused on photography. And Artpark, a New York state park for the arts in nearby Lewiston, offered residencies and work opportunities for the creation of temporary, site-specific outdoor sculpture and installations in all media, including film, video, photography, performance, and sound. Meanwhile, key staff members at many venerable institutions, including the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, welcomed experimentation and collaboration. The English Department of the University at Buffalo assembled an impressive roster of professors, including John Barth, Robert Creeley, and Leslie Fiedler. Artists from around the world visited Buffalo to test ideas, create work, and teach in formal and informal settings, all in a climate of shared resources and institutional decentralization. One might legitimately argue, as Richard Herskowitz does in the catalogue of a 1988 exhibition at Cornell University, that the "roots" of postmodernism "lie largely in Buffalo."²

Looking back at this wealth of material, Longo reflected, with a characteristic pun: "The effects of the Albright-Knox and Media Study made the situation



Robert Longo, circa 1975

picture perfect in Buffalo. I've got the films of Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton, and Paul Sharits in my blood. ... Godard was real important to me for narrative film ... and even some of the films by Stan Brakhage. Those movies were a primal ooze for us."⁵ His first date with Cindy Sherman, he recalled, was a visit to the Albright-Knox.

The Hallwalls founders, while administrative innocents, listened to the sirens of their time, borrowed from the structures of Artists Space in New York and A Space in Toronto, and sought advice from those around them. Linda Cathcart, then Assistant Curator at the Albright-Knox, and her colleagues Director Robert T. Buck and Curators Douglas G. Schultz and James Wood, provided early mediation to the thrones of federal and state public funding, and the museum became a ready, highly visible collaborator in a series of artists' installations, exhibitions, and lecture presentations. "They always asked the right questions," recalls Cathcart. "'How do we do that?' they'd say. 'We want to do it right. You know how to do it; tell us.' And you couldn't give them half an answer, because they wouldn't go away. They weren't against anything. They wanted to know how to apply for grants, how to hang shows, how to work publicity, how to do fine work. They didn't make it into a polemic situation, and they did the same thing to artists, too. They wanted to know just how to conduct themselves. They'd come over to the Albright and make me see things, at Artpark, at Hallwalls...and we got to be friends, interested in some of the same artists."⁶

While some area artists complained they had inadequate representation in the Albright-Knox, the upstarts from Hallwalls joined forces with the city's major art

institution to invite interesting visitors to Buffalo. Clough's menu: "You sniff it out, you go find it, you eat it, and then you *are* it. Culture consumption. We just wanted to be artists. It was a way to deal with being in a provincial situation."⁷

Gathering and sharing information was a high priority for the young administrators. Dr. Gerald O'Grady, director of both the Center for Media Study and Media Study/Buffalo, provided access to media tools, screenings, and ideas. Longo and Clough also made visits to the daily press and enlisted critics' enthusiasm—which, for many visiting and most regional artists, resulted in their first critical notices.

The artist team that helped organize the first year of Hallwalls activities included Diane Bertolo, Linda Brooks, Jeff Catalano, Ken Davis, Kitty Hamilton, Joe Hryvniak, Gary Judkins, Pierce Kamke, Larry Lundy, Philip Malkin, Chris Rusiniak, Cindy Sherman, Joe Panone, Rick Zucker, and Michael Zwack.⁸ Weekly meetings, which often turned into freewheeling parties, were religiously documented on videotape, and the

newsletter of events and opinion soon appeared. The new gallery's purpose, as declared in the newsletter, was to provide "direct access to developing ideas in Art for Western New York and Southern Ontario ... through exhibitions, a visiting Artist/Critic program, and correspondence with other organizations involved with recent Art in the United States, Canada and Europe."⁹

The first official Hallwalls event was a lecture by Robert Irwin at Buffalo State College followed by

**WORKING
ON PAPER:
DEVELOPING THE IDEA**
BAER
BROOKS
CATALANO
CLOUGH
FRANK
GEORGENES
HATCHETT
HRYVNIAK
KAMKE
KRIMS
LINK
LONGO
MALKIN
MARCUS-TAMALONIS
PANONE
REVELLE
SHARITS
SMITH
SOWISKI
SWEETMAN
TOPOLSKI
WHITE
ZWACK
THE FIRST EXHIBIT AT
HALLWALLS, GALLERY OF
THE ASHFORD HOLLOW
FOUNDATION 30 ESSEX ST.
BUFFALO, N.Y. 883-1041

an informal conversation; Longo had convinced him to come to Buffalo at no charge. Clough traveled to Toronto to ask Michael Snow to present a screening of his films at Buffalo State and then staged a dinner conversation with Snow, Hollis Frampton, and Paul Sharits.

The first exhibition—featuring Longo, Panone, Roger Rapp, and Andrew Topolski—actually took place at Gallery 219, the UB student exhibition space. The first onsite exhibition, *Working on Paper: Developing the Idea*, featured 100 works on paper by 26 area artists.

From the start, collaboration was the watchword. Another basic premise was to cut across disciplines and ideologies. Willoughby Sharp was the first artist in residence; during his week in Buffalo he presented a "Two Year Retrospective" of his work, showed videotapes, and performed. Sharp was one of the publishers of *Avalanche*, along with Liza Béar (who also visited Hallwalls early on); the two of them led to Dan Graham and Vito Acconci, both of whom worked simultaneously

in performance, video, and visual art. Acconci, who first came for a 10-day residency, became a loyal friend and later received Hallwalls artists when they moved to New York. Zwack, Longo, Sherman, and Dwyer each recall how they were influenced and moved by the serious purpose and professional manner of his work.

Within the first six months, Hallwalls

presented an exhibition of bookworks, established a monthly literary series, received an \$8,500 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, and brought in Lucy Lippard to discuss work by contemporary women artists. Fifteen months after its first exhibitions, Hallwalls received an \$8,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

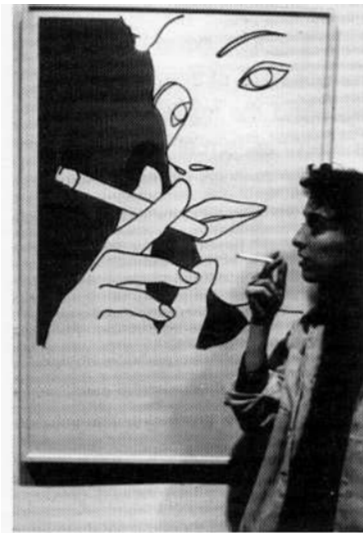
Visual artist Nancy Dwyer first encountered the gallery

during the winter of 1975. She was attracted not only by the art, but by the serious fun the place offered, and the drive and commitment of Longo and Clough. "What I perceived, at least at the time, was that most of the energy came from Robert and Charlie, that they were both really strong characters, and they both talked a lot, and they both had a lot of direction and were both really knowledge-thirsty. I really admired and really liked that," Dwyer recalls. "The scene there was kind of hippie-ish. It was very casual, witty, not private. Anybody could come and go and be a part of it as they pleased. ... We all drank a lot and smoked a lot of pot and hung out and had fun. There was a lot of music, which was always really loud. ... But also, these guys were really serious. They were really serious about ideas. I had been in a lot of situations before where there was a lot of hanging out. But it was clear that Robert and Charlie were really ambitious guys—and I don't mean that in a bad way. I mean intellectually ambitious. And that was really exciting. That's what I liked about it most. It seemed like things were really getting done."⁸

Dwyer remembers her first visit to Hallwalls: "I went over with Kenny [Davis, an art student], and he took me to Robert's studio, and I met Robert, and Robert just talked non-stop. He was just totally overwhelming, and he was just completely turned on by conceptual work that he was finding out about. I remember in the middle of talking to him, he was demonstrating something by taking a hammer and hammering on caps on the ground, and all the caps were exploding, and it had something to do with some point he was making, and I remember being kind of intimidated by the whole situation, but very interested."

Dwyer thought of Clough as the arbiter of information, filled with facts about art history and contemporary practice, while Cindy Sherman was quiet and mysterious, though her art seemed the most developed. Dwyer, like many others in the Hallwalls circle, was searching for a place to be comfortable, "where people were talking and had some real attitude."

"I think we were all just trying to be cool. ... I wanted to find Cool and be there and then become Cool. ... At that time, the dominant art form, the hippest art form, was definitely music. At Hallwalls, I realized that I could find a place of hipness in the visual arts world that was equivalent to rock and roll ..., that was connected to the literalness of the music ... It was hard to



Nancy Dwyer in front of one of her works, circa 1980.

translate that music, say of the Velvet Underground, into Action Painting."

On another level, Hallwalls was a couples' scene, Dwyer remembers. Robert and Cindy were dating, Clough was dating Diane Bertolo, and Dwyer was with Michael Zwack. The scene was primarily heterosexual, and oriented toward white men, she says. "I definitely thought it was Robert and Charlie's. They were the bosses of Hallwalls ... though not in any exclusive way. They'd have been happy to include anybody that anybody wanted. They were always trying to get people to help, to suggest who should come up to visit. But we were all pretty naive. That's just the way things were. ... I really was so impressed with those guys, that they seemed free enough with themselves to be so excited about everything that it was really contagious, and they were really generous. It's something about Robert that's always been fantastic. He's very generous. And not that many people are, especially artists. They all get so damn proprietary, territorial, and petty. Hallwalls definitely was not like that. I don't ever remember any in-fighting, which is kind of amazing."

Michael Zwack's perceptions of the early days are similar. "Somebody said there's a place where they rent studios to artists, and I went there, and I met Charlie a few weeks later, who was another guy who was doing stuff. Plain and simple. He was doing things. ... And then Robert showed up, and here was another person who was doing it. Cindy was there, and there was another person who was doing it. It was interesting because here was this kind of support behind the desire to make art. I think that was one of the most important things that happened there. Because Robert and Charlie set up this system to bring New York and other people, other artists, [to Buffalo]. They also set up this educational system. And I learned a lot there because I found other artists they brought. We found other artists who were interested in just making art. That's what we talked about there, making art. And that was pretty much the daily activity. ... What I was doing at that point was just making work, on an intuitive basis. I had no idea where it would go, what it could do. When Charlie and Robert talked about opening a gallery, I really didn't think it was an idea that would work, but as soon as people started painting walls, I painted walls. It was that kind of thing. ... I was happy to be there. It was a dialogue; it wasn't



Cindy Sherman: handout accompanying exhibition, 1976.

a critique. ... It was the idea of freedom, being free."⁹

For Cindy Sherman, the constant stream of visiting artists, the weekly meetings, and the frequent discussions were more valuable than her formal art training. Like Longo, she was a student at Buffalo State College, but she agrees with him that, with the exception of one key faculty artist for each (Joseph Piccillo for Longo, Barbara Jo Revelle for Sherman), their real education was conducted at the Albright-Knox and Hallwalls itself. The environment at the gallery was intense. "I got tired of what a sort of communal sense the place had," Sherman says.¹⁰ "I mean, living right there, I think I wanted more privacy, so I would retreat to my back room. ... The visiting artists were really influential, but I would also get tired of how Robert and Charlie just sort of wanted to suck all of the information out of these people, and after a while I just had to retreat into my little room and say, 'I've had enough of this theoretical whatever.'"

Clough had been involved at A Space in Toronto—listening, he remembers, "to the kingpins conspire about how they're going to get the money and how they're going to get the cool talent to come, how they're going to get their own work done, and how they're going to further their careers." It was a scenario that would be repeated in Buffalo. "We, the Hallwalls conspirators, realized that it was a way to focus atten-



Charles Clough in his studio, circa 1975.

tion and to get it for ourselves and at the same time serve the community.”¹¹

Longo was active in the Visual Arts Board at Buffalo State College, and Clough was friendly with Judy Treible and Joe Hryniak at the University at Buffalo, who were involved with music and the university's public radio station, WBFO. Their connections led to modest student funds. “Then Larry Griffis’ brother Jack came to live at the building, and he was like an older guy,” Clough recalled. “He had a great life in Europe, he had sort of an independent income, and at that point he was disillusioned and came back to Buffalo with nothing to do, so we told him that he should help us with the gallery ... and that was it, that was Hallwalls. Then it was just programming and keeping the core group happy. ... Robert and I figured a lot of it out, but if people came up with ideas for programming, we did ‘em.”

Creating Hallwalls was fun, and a struggle. “Those were our *bateau laivoir* days,” Clough continued. “You know, funky youth. That’s what we had: sex and drugs and rock ‘n’ roll. I mean, it wasn’t without tons of angst. A lot of heartbreak. In retrospect, now that Cindy Sherman is a genius, and Longo is taking Hollywood, and the others are up there with ‘em, it was magic. I can think of two dozen half-hour television shows, soap opera kind of stuff, that we were living through. Great dinners, great drunken nights, dancing, other stuff, intellectual stuff. Realizing dreams, ambitions. ... It sounds like it was all fun. It was totally poverty-ridden. I waited on tables on weekends. We didn’t get our first grant as an institution until the fall of ‘75. ... You see the trade-offs. It wasn’t about minimum wage or benefits. The prize was access to

whomever was visiting. You get to talk to the famous artist. That’s cool. You get to have dinner with the famous artist. That’s cool. That was what it was all about. So any kind of power manipulating or whatever, was simply to be able to choose whomever was coming and then to be able to sit next to them.”

And the artists came. Longo, Sherman, and Bertolo worked at Artpark, and they invited artists who visited the park to Hallwalls. Clough played on the hometown angle to encourage Robert Mangold, who was born in the Buffalo area, to return. They asked Linda Benglis, and they went to pick her up at the airport in an old, broken-down van — “like we were out of *Zap* cartoons” — and Benglis “looked like a star. Her expression was slightly aghast when she saw us. ... We were totally oblivious; we were not fashion plates,” Clough laughs.

Then, as quickly as it was formed, the original Hallwalls began to dissolve. Zwack and Dwyer left town first, in late 1976, then Sherman received an NEA artist’s grant, and she and Longo moved to New York in 1977. “I was feeling quite stranded,” Clough recalls. The remaining founder turned his attention to legal incorporation (which entailed a split from Ashford Hollow for logistical reasons) and the fate of CEPA Gallery, which was about to shut down after its director left. Hallwalls was incorporated in 1977; Clough and Pierce Kamke briefly became officers of CEPA, which maintained its separate identity while moving next door to Hallwalls in the Essex Street complex. The following year, Clough, too, left Buffalo.

Perhaps the most important exhibitions for the future careers of the Hallwalls core group were the exchange shows with A Space in Toronto and, especially, with Artists Space in New York. In 1976, Helene Winer, the new director of the alternative space in downtown Manhattan, travelled to Buffalo to visit Hallwalls. The New York State Arts Council had just created an initiative for funding cooperative efforts among artist-run organizations across the state, so the timing was perfect to create a New York-Buffalo exchange.

“The Artists Space exchange show was a big deal for us. It was our first show in New York. ... We were trying to sniff around. How can we look good? How can we play ball? We wanted to be in the game,” Clough recalled. The exhibition, in November of 1976, featured the Hallwalls couples, Longo and Sherman, Clough and

Bertolo, Zwack and Dwyer. Winer remembers the young artists' forays to New York "to scout around and find people and artists they wanted to invite up to Buffalo. ... They were really engaging and adorable and smart and energetic."¹² Longo, she recalled, chose to do a performance as his contribution to the exchange exhibition. "Even as a child, he had to bring one hundred people and a million props into the gallery, and it was great chaos and a complicated production. And it was all right, and I was hooked with that kind of level of production. He took care of it all himself, and with his friends. He always worked collaboratively as well; people seemed to love to work with him on things, and he enjoyed that."

In a 1982 interview, Jim Reinish, former director of Visual Arts for the New York State Council on the Arts (and, later, associate director of Zabriskie Gallery in New York), commented on the success of the Hallwalls group. "The incredible thing is that they all have done so well, so quickly. I don't know of another group of artists who have had that kind of impact."¹³

When Charles Clough left Buffalo in 1978, John Maggiotto, a 23-year old University at Buffalo Business Administration graduate, became the new director of Hallwalls. He developed a board of directors and a membership base, and tightened the grant procedures. Clough commented in an exit interview with *The Buffalo News*: "Robert and I programmed because we wanted to know about certain work or the people involved. Now, there're younger people who want to grab part of the contemporary situation and teach themselves, and, by way of that, they are the ones who will shape the future of Hallwalls. There are always going to be people coming and going from Hallwalls, but there will be the constant 20 or 30, most of them artists, whose lives revolve around the place."¹⁴

NOTES

- ¹ "The Network," The Hallwalls Gallery Publication, September 1975, unpaginated.
- ² Richard Herskowitz, *Media Buff.*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, 1988, unpaginated.
- ³ Anthony Bannon, "Image Scavengers," *The Buffalo News*, July 1, 1983, *Gusto*, p. 14.
- ⁴ Anthony Bannon, "An Artists' Place," *The Buffalo News*, January 29, 1982, *Gusto*, p. 12.
- ⁵ Charles Clough, unpublished interview by Elizabeth Licata, New York City, June 18, 1994.
- ⁶ "History," The Hallwalls Gallery Publication, September 1975, unpaginated.
- ⁷ "Purpose," The Hallwalls Gallery Publication, September 1975, unpaginated.
- ⁸ Nancy Dwyer, unpublished interview by author, New York City, March 28, 1994.
- ⁹ Michael Zwack, unpublished interview by author, New York City, September 7, 1993.
- ¹⁰ Cindy Sherman, unpublished interview by author, New York City, July 20, 1993.
- ¹¹ Charles Clough, unpublished interview by Elizabeth Licata, New York City, June 18, 1994.
- ¹² Helene Winer, unpublished interview by author, New York City, July 16, 1993.
- ¹³ Bannon, "An Artists' Place," p. 3.
- ¹⁴ Anthony Bannon, "The Avant Garde: Hallwalls Enters a New Era," *The Buffalo News*, September 1, 1978, *Gusto*, p. 12.

Anthony Bannon, through 1995 Director of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, was recently named Director of the George Eastman House in Rochester. He was the art writer at The Buffalo News when Hallwalls was established, and participated as a filmmaker and critic in its early programs and discussions.

BLAME IT ON THE SPAGHETTI

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST FIVE YEARS



Jonathan Borofsky at work, Jan. 1977

ANTHONY BANNON "An Artists' Place," *The Buffalo Evening News*, January 29, 1982:

Ellen Carey, an artist who once lived in Buffalo, tells a story, and it has made the rounds from Carey, who now lives in New York, to Linda Cathcart, a Houston museum director who once was a curator living in Buffalo, to William Currie, who is the director of Hallwalls Gallery here. The story, stripped of the hyperbole picked up on its travels, goes like this:

"At a party in New York a critic asked me, 'How did it happen; how come there are so many artists in New York from Buffalo; are you all friends?'"

Carey laughed. "They call us the Buffalo Mafia."

"So what did you tell him?"

"I said it was the finger of God that put us all there in Buffalo. Sometimes things happen, and this was a special, magical time."

1. CRITICAL MASS

JUDY TREIBLE (Director of UB's Gallery 219 circa 1974; now employed by Gannett News Service): The early 1970s in Buffalo were times of change and turmoil. Ideas from the counter culture were seeping into Western New York despite the best efforts of the keepers of the status quo to shut them out. Vietnam War protesters had closed down the UB campus, head shops and waterbed stores sprang up on Allen Street, long hair for men and no bras for women were badges of courage, middle-class kids chose subsistence living so they could hang out. People became more receptive to trying new things and some found the courage and energy to create things independently. Some examples:

- Avant gardist Lukas Foss, conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic, organized heroic musical events in Delaware Park that were packed.

- A small group of students, faculty and community organizers (of which I was one) formed a buying club to bring affordable natural foods to Buffalo. We'd take orders from people, drive to NYC in a van to pick up 50-lb bags of organic rice, whole wheat flour, etc., package the food to individual orders, then folks would show up at the "United States of Consciousness" head shop on Allen Street a week later to pick up their bag of groceries. Despite the bizarre logistics, we got a big response. So we rented a store front and thus was born the Lexington Real Foods Community Co-op. There were constant attempts by the city to shut us down, the conventional wisdom being we were all Commies. But people supported us. And with the help of student funds, the North Buffalo Co-op began a year or so later, then the now-defunct Allen Street Co-op.

- Poet Judy Kerman wanted to promote the work of women writers and artists so she thought up the idea of *Earth's Daughters: A Feminist Periodical of the Arts*. I helped her get it started—designing and contributing to the first few issues, distributing copies at alternative bookstores around the country. Recently the collective of *Earth's Daughters* published its 20th anniversary issue.

It's my feeling that this kind of free-flowing atmosphere was fertile ground for the birth of Hallwalls. That at the time, it was perfectly within reason for Charlie Clough to think that the scruffy fiberboard walls between artists' studio doors could become a gallery and that people would want to come. There was also a critical mass of interested, committed and slightly off-kilter people who wanted to participate.

[Excerpted from e-mail to Ronald Ehmke, 1995.]

JOE HRYVNIAK (*artist, archivist*): I had moved to Buffalo in 1971, stayed on after grad school. There was a whole community [in town]; the art energy fused with other kinds of alternative energies: the food co-ops, alternative papers. Judy Treible put out a mimeographed paper for the co-op. We turned the same energy into a "Buffalo consciousness." We won a hundred bucks from a snow sculpture contest and decided to spend the money on campaigns to explore urban issues, the future of Buffalo, its history, so we formed the Buffalo Idea Group. It was a local thing, but we were looking out at the world, bringing things in.

When the Student Union was on the old campus [of UB], it was a center for all of this. Gallery 219 was there, and WBFO. That's where I met Charlie Clough.

[This and subsequent quotes are from a phone interview with Ron Ehmke, 1994.]

CHARLES CLOUGH: Buffalo is cold, depressed, and depressing. I grew up there and left it for art school in NYC. I dropped out at the time of the Cambodian invasion and Kent State killings and returned to Buffalo saturated with the issues of that time. I wanted to do something where I was from.

[Excerpted from statement in Hallwalls: 5 Years catalogue, 1980.]

LINDA CATHCART (*curator at the Albright-Knox during the early years of Hallwalls*): Clough, a bit older than [Robert] Longo (23 to be exact), had traveled to various places, looking at things and making art since about 1970.... Longo, 21 and originally from Long Island, having also drifted around a bit—he even went to college in Texas for a while—was then a student at the State University College at Buffalo, where he was president of something called the Visual Arts Board [...] ... a small group of art students encouraged, particularly by the painter and instructor Joseph Piccillo, toward the expenditure of some funds wrangled from the administration for "the arts."

... A fellow conspirator, Judy Treible, a student of graphic design, had been named coordinator [of UB's Gallery 219]. Judy provided a link through which they could transform an apathetic structure by guerrilla tactics along with genuine enthusiasm. This example was to mark the method by which Hallwalls generally got things accomplished. The attitude of those participants was then, as it is now, "more is better," "never say no to a possibility," "we have more ideas than we can possibly use as projects," and "if there's a place no one's using, we'll take it."

[This and subsequent quotes excerpted from catalogue essay in Hallwalls: 5 Years, 1980.]

CHARLES CLOUGH: It was a stolen idea from Artists Space [in Manhattan] and A Space in Toronto. I'd gone to Pratt in Brooklyn in 1969, and I didn't know what the art world was at that point. One of the teachers at Pratt turned me on to *Artforum*, and that's when I got an idea of what the art world consisted of: that there were galleries and then there were these trade magazines that serviced the galleries, and then there were the artists who were doing whatever they wanted to do and then there were also the museums. But the part of the art world that I didn't know about was that the artists were alive and that they made money. I read the magazine to find out where the galleries were, but I didn't really go around to them in that first year. I quit Pratt after one year, in 1970....

Being in a provincial situation is a little stifling. Once you figure out what the system is and what the components are, all you need is a map and a sense of what your mission is. Coming up with your mission is the very tricky part. I started to look at Toronto because I thought I might not want to live in the U.S. with regard to the draft situation. It turned out I didn't have to move—I had a great draft number, but this Ontario college was a lot cheaper than Pratt ...

I wasn't connected. I thought of the experience [of returning to Buffalo] as taking my existence down to a caveman level, making a fire in the courtyard and cooking meat. It was rudimentary. It was a transition from the illustration-type work that I did as a teenager. I got interested in wood and Brancusi-type shapes, carved wood and stuff. But in reading what was in the magazines I realized that what I was doing was totally wrong in relation to Minimalism and I felt challenged to understand what this cutting edge of the avant-garde was all about, with conceptual art, minimalism, earth art and body art and all this stuff. Getting turned on to the magazines by this one teacher was crucial because all the art school stuff was like, so what? The dialogue of record was in the magazines, so you plug into that and then you've got what's going on in New York.

This group of young artists in Toronto were forming A Space, which seemed to be in response to conceptual art, body

art, earth art. And there was *Avalanche* magazine which serviced that industry. Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear ran the magazine, and they helped send people up to Toronto. I plugged into that group, and then a couple of years later that was who we were plugged into at Hallwalls. I pursued other lines of discipline, sources of talent, but anyway there was a network going on between New York and Toronto, San Francisco and Los Angeles and so on, and alternative places, alternative cultures sort of sprung out of the counterculture sensibility that was happening in the late sixties. So I did the one year of school in Toronto that allowed me the opportunity to see how the city ran, what their cultural institutions were, cutting-edge kind of stuff.

[This and subsequent quotes taken from a September 1993 interview with Elizabeth Licata.]

2. IF YOU BUILD IT ...

LINDA BROOKS (photographer, teacher): I was a graduate student at SUNY Buffalo in 1975, where I was grateful for the experience of being a full-time student again and for receiving a graduate teaching assistantship... We spent a lot of time at Ashford Hollow [a complex of artists' studios and living spaces] on Essex Street, where my husband Joe Panone had a studio. Joe's studio was next to Charlie Clough's studio and we were all involved in the start-up of the gallery. Robert Longo was a student of Joe's at Buffalo State where Joe was a graduate student teaching assistant for a sculpture class. At the time Robert was making stone carvings when Joe told him about his studio and other artists on Essex Street. Charlie and Robert met, they started writing grants, and the artists just kept coming.

Jack Griffis, [Ashford Hollow Founder] Larry's brother, became a patron to Hallwalls. He contributed money for exhibitions, artists, the Hallwalls paper, and for food and parties. Jack loved to party and he found many common souls amongst us.

[This and subsequent quotes excerpted from a November 1994 letter for this publication.]

JACK GRIFFIS (Ashford Hollow Foundation project director): I was in Europe during a lot of the 60s. ... It was a state of siege in a way; I got very aware of the political scenario. When I got back here in '73, I wanted to do something for myself and my family. ... I thought it was my position or duty to do something constructive. ... I wasn't the kind of sponsor who lived on Nottingham Terrace or Middlesex Road and sent in checks.

Larry apprised me that Longo had a desire to start a gallery. I didn't know that. He said that Longo wanted to start a gallery in other places, but it had fizzled out... I think when they got the diverted funds, and I had covered rent expenses to the satisfaction of Larry, [Longo and Clough] were able to move over to the top floor, which is a great space. ... We didn't have a macadam here before; the dust would blow up every time somebody would come in.

... I have my whole life in here; I'm breathing in the fumes and the grime of those days. I experienced the same problems of any other artist here, and I'm twice as old. I'm half a century old, and here these guys are 23, 24, 25.

[This and subsequent quotes excerpted from an interview with Sara Kellner, 1994.]

CHARLES CLOUGH: In order to make the space we needed people to put up the sheet rock, and do the light fixtures, the printing, the mailing and everything that goes along with it. And that was Joe Panone and Linda Brooks, Mike Zwack and Nancy Dwyer, and Robert and Cindy and a couple of girlfriends who were co-helpers up there.

JOE HRYVNIAK: Pierce Kamke built the place. It was all handmade. We learned how to spackle, everything. We'd find a new room to rent and then take it over. I found a recycled photocopy machine on the street, and that was the first office equipment.

LINDA CATHCART: The group met once a week "to deal with a list of what must be taken care of, compiled by Longo and Clough," I quote from an early prospectus. A gentle dictatorship to be sure, but one which came to change hands from project to project as the young group tested its abilities and strengths. A true sense of community formed rapidly and so too a sense of responsibility. Among

the duties of the “curators” was documentation by photographic and videotaped means, beginning and keeping a library and holding open forums to “see and discuss each other’s work, and share information about the work we have seen, new materials, or techniques, etc.” I know it sounds impossibly idealistic, but it did work. People showed up, they looked, they listened but most of all they stayed to help and then grew to participate in an independent way. Hallwalls seemed to be open to anyone doing any project, if everyone thought it was a good idea. And since no one had seen much, everyone thought just about everything was a good idea, sometimes really terrific, very rarely awful or boring, and the place still works that way today—five years later.

MICHAEL ZWACK: People would sit around and say, “Well this person would like to have these people here,” or “We were thinking about bringing these people here,” but pretty much all of it was exciting to me. It didn’t really matter because I was gaining knowledge about all of this stuff as it was happening. I didn’t really know a lot of the stuff that was going on beforehand; I knew some of it but not a great deal. Also I was working a lot on my own stuff. I was getting opportunities that I was paying attention to as opposed to being part of the organization. Even though I went to all the meetings and participated in all the things; there was a lot of physical work there, like painting and keeping things organized and so on.

[This and subsequent quotes excerpted from an interview with Elizabeth Licata, October 1993.]

JACK GRIFFIS: Well, clearly the young artists were not just content to be regional Western New York artists. They had a good clear sense of where they wanted to go... There was an international scope. Then there were the politics, because [the Artists’ Committee, another group of artists based at Ashford Hollow] was in a confrontational stance with the Albright. Then we had Hallwalls, i.e., Clough, Longo, Sherman, who didn’t want to be in a confrontational stance. They wanted the opposite. ... They knew that they had to be allied with the curators of the finest gallery there is: the Albright. They built up their connections.

3. ... THEY WILL COME

LINDA CATHCART: Every project had potential to be shared and as they were generous with praise and acknowledgment of any and all assistance, they got a lot of it ... And more often than not, people helped or joined or paid for or co-sponsored because the same enthusiasm that had convinced their first visiting artist, Robert Irwin, to come from L.A. for no fee and a promise of a bed in one of the Hallwalls’ members’ houses worked on everyone else too. For a long time Linda Brooks and Joe Panone (a respectable married couple, all of 25 years of age) were host and hostess because they had a “real house”—which meant they had more than one room and heat. They also knew how to cook. But no one ever complained as far as I remember and as the list of Hallwalls members grew, so did the ambitions for the place and so did its parameters, both physically and intellectually.

MICHAEL ZWACK: Artists would come in and we’d figure out what to do to them, I mean *with* them. But it wasn’t like there were thousands of people waiting to come to stuff. We had very intimate events. Artists came and relaxed; it wasn’t fast-paced. They didn’t have to escape anybody.

CHARLES CLOUGH: The fact that [many contemporary film and video artists, including the faculty of UB’s Center for Media Study] worked in other disciplines, like Richard Serra was making videotapes and sculpture [was a big influence]. Our sense of avant-garde was kind of trans-disciplinary. ... I think we were a genuinely critical audience, we were selecting things that were timely and of interest to us. We had to confront things as artists.

GEORGE HOWELL (*writer*): In Hallwalls’ first years, Charlie and Robert were always at odds about programming because Robert wanted more installation and performance artists and Charlie wanted more painters. Both were pretty smug, as I remem-

her, about which mode of art production was leading the way. ...

... At first, I just hung around on the edges because I was a writer, not an artist. Eventually, I ended up painting walls, hanging shows and spell-checking grants, because if you were hanging around, you had to get involved. I had a lot of arguments with Robert about writing and literature, but finally made a place for myself when I started *Writeratio*, a monthly series of tape recordings and readings of work by Jack Kerouac, Charles Olson, John Cage. But when Robert started using words in his work—casting them in aluminum, carving them into bricks—I realized I could make videotapes, objects, and installations. That shifting of creative positions, the “intermedia” attitude, made those days so exciting—if we were struggling over how to accommodate language and objects in a process of making meaning, so were these odd, wonderful artists from New York, California and Europe. Buffalo, suddenly, had a window open to international art in an immediate way that none of us had experienced before. To drop in at Essex Street and find Vito Acconci kneeling down in front of the fireplace, working on an audiotape, was exhilarating.

[This and subsequent quotes excerpted from a statement written for this publication.]

AB: Was there a visiting artist who was important to you, more than others?

CINDY SHERMAN: I guess Vito, because I really was very resistant to him as an artist in the beginning. I think I saw some book of his and remember telling Robert I thought it was disgusting ... Yeah, sure, he's hiding his penis, or ... you see this picture of the woman behind him with it in her mouth or something, and I just thought it was sick and stupid and sexist—and then, I don't know why, but I think meeting him, I just realized he's not like that at all, and I just totally believed in what he was doing, as comedy, even, as body art. Body art sort of clicked for me, so people like him and Chris Burden were really important.

[Excerpted from an interview with Anthony Bannon, July 1993.]

VITO ACCONCI: At Hallwalls, it was maybe three years after I had stopped using my own person in pieces, but it was as if I couldn't find yet a replacement for that focus on person. So, I mean, I think of those pieces of '74, '75 as tenuous—it took me a while to realize the focus wasn't going to be on me, that it had to be on you, the viewer. I wasn't at that point yet ... Maybe I started to see a lack because doing a piece in Hallwalls meant not just doing the piece, but being in the middle of talk and in the middle of discussion. ... For Robert, I think, my generation sort of maybe opened things up so far that his generation almost had to go to a kind of closure. I think that interested me. And that's exactly how I would have wanted to influence the work. I didn't want a follower. If someone was going to be influenced by me, what I hoped it would lead to would be, at the same time you're influenced by me, how you're going to kill me as the father.

[Excerpted from a 1993 interview with Anthony Bannon]

CINDY SHERMAN: It was really exciting for all of us having New York artists come up and visit. We were so far away from the real art scene in the city, but we would read about these people in magazines, and they were our heroes ... Hannah Wilke, Liza Bear, Willoughby Sharp, Robin Winters, Vito Acconci... people who either did installation or performance work. I was inspired by a lot of performance, like, say, Chris Burden (although what he did at Hallwalls wasn't too great).

[Excerpted from an interview with Jeanne Siegel in Art Talk: The Early 80s, edited by Siegel, New York, DaCapo Press, 1988.]

CHRIS BURDEN: I'd like to be a car manufacturer; that's a fantasy I have, I don't know if I'll act on it or not. But it's not to make money; I mean, I'd expect to make money if I worked for 20 years, trying to make a better car and I'd made 20 million of them, I'd better be making some money in the deal, too—'cause making cars is probably harder than making Art [laughs]. ...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Why don't you tell us about the shift in your style, of the last few ...

BURDEN: No, no, I just want to stick to cars.

[Excerpt from transcript of artist's talk at Hallwalls, December 5, 1975.]

CINDY SHERMAN: I'm trying to think of women that would have been an influence, but I think the only woman who came up there that was influential, in a sense, was Suzy Lake, who never really became well known. I think she's in Toronto. She did a series of herself made up, turning into a character or something like that.

[Excerpted from interview with Anthony Bannon, July 1993.]

4. A LIVING ROOM IN A VERY LARGE HOUSE

JOE HRYVNIAK: Cindy was taking classes at Buff State. Her first roll of film came out completely black. We were thinking, 'Well, you could try to bleach it,' but it looked like there was no future for her in photography.

KEVIN NOBLE (*visual artist*): Although Hallwalls got its name from the fact that it was originally the hallway between a series of artists' studios, I always thought of it more as a living room than a hallway. From the beginning it was a place where a community of artists, writers, musicians, and filmmakers came to meet and hang out. Some of the artists lived in their studios within the complex and this added to the sense of it being like a living room in a very large house. Usually at sometime between 10 and 11 a.m., the artists and others who made up the community would start drifting into 30 Essex Street, the coffee pot was filled up and refilled as the day's activities began. There was always something happening and always something that needed to be done.

As an artist-run gallery the distinctions between the making of art and the presentation of art blended into everyday activities such as eating, listening to music and watching television. Inevitably the visit of an out-of-town artist for an exhibition or performance would include a large communal spaghetti dinner. If the weather was nice it often meant a barbecue in the parking lot. Every week on Thursday night at 9 from 10 to 20 people showed up to watch *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* on the television upstairs.

[Excerpted from a statement written for this publication.]

GEORGE HOWELL: Whenever I think about the early Hallwalls, I remember that funny group picture Charlie Clough made out of a photo sequence of fifteen or twenty of us moving, en masse, around the Ashford Hollow Foundation courtyard. With our enthusiasm and nerviness and sheer energy, we could have been the 300 faces staring off the cover of the first, and only, issue of Hallwalls' newsletter.

It's hard to look back and assess what was going on in 1974-75, because so much happened. I know dozens of stories about artists and openings, fights over grants and catalogues, jealousies and teamwork, some very devastating memories and some very beautiful ones. I can't separate the place from my friendship with Robert, Charlie, Cindy Sherman, Diane Bertolo, Kevin Noble, Linda Neaman, Mike Zwack, Larry Lundy, Gary Judkins, Peg Brady, Lee Eiferman, Paul Lemberg, and a lot of other folks. Hallwalls was a gallery qua commune qua family.

JOE HRYVNIAK: Charlie would fly through film: analyze space, capture stuff. His work area was always so neat; he'd collect rooms of stuff—automobile paint finish, things like that—and he'd pile these layers of stuff on top of each other, photograph that, then paint on that. He was the most visual person in the world.

GARY JUDKINS (*artist, art therapist, founding member*): Michael Zwack had a studio on Grant Street, right next to the Showplace Theater (which was still a movie theater in those days). He had bought a reconditioned photo booth, and people used to hang out at his place and shoot self-portraits there. For fifty cents you got four photos of yourself. I think it was Larry Lundy who talked Zwack into moving it over to Hallwalls, which had been running for a year or so by this point; we had just started getting state funds for the first big fix-up. Lundy, Longo, Zwack & I hauled it over in the truck I

had back then, and it stayed in the front entrance for all those years that we were building the gallery proper. A fellow who owned vending machines took care of it for us—this guy kept servicing it the whole time we had it!

I'd help set up the shows and then always get in the photo booth. Everybody did, at pretty much every opening. A lot of neat stuff came out of there: portraits of everybody who visited in those early years. Just about every artist who came to Hallwalls paid their fifty cents and had their pictures taken.

When Antfarm was at Artpark they buried a 1969 Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser—one of the slickmobiles of the day—just above the Art El. When we buried it—I think it was in '75—it was a pretty good car. They're gonna dig it up in the year 2000—there's a time capsule inside, and in the time capsule there's lots of photo booth pictures of all the founders.

[This and subsequent quotes are from a phone interview with Ron Ehmke, October 1995.]

LINDA CATHCART: What did they do in the off-days—when nobody was visiting or when it was snowing too hard to get the visitors in from the airport or, more often, back out to it? They made a big pot of spaghetti and looked at the videotapes of the past events, exchanged books, wrote grants, calendar or announcement copy and planned for the bigger and better—the future. No one ever thought for one minute that that was a funny thing to do. And it wasn't.

RE: Who came up with the name "Hallwalls"?

JOE HRYVNIAK: I dunno. Blame it on the spaghetti dinners.

5. "DADA DAY": A FUNKY, KICK-ASS PARTY

CHARLES CLOUGH: It was a clique. I remember at Buff State there was a poster Robert and I made for a lecture we were giving and people scratched out our faces and wrote DEMI-GODS over it. It pissed some people off; it was clubby; it was fun. Robert and I figured a lot of it out, but if people came up with ideas for programming we did 'em. Larry Lundy was a co-conspirator; he had the idea for a Dada festival.

LARRY LUNDY (*founding member; now an art director and set designer in Chicago*): In November of 1975, I began planning a 60th anniversary salute to Dada, which was "born" in Zurich, February 5, 1916, at the Cabaret Voltaire. The celebration was three-fold:

- 1) to honor another art-movement which dealt with ideas and anti-ideas,
- 2) to commemorate something more thought-provoking in 1976 than America's Bicentennial, and
- 3) to throw a funky kick-ass party in February, in Buffalo.

In researching and planning this event I uncovered a lot of artists who were practicing Dadaists or neo-Dadaists and wanted to contribute in any way possible... Prior to the actual Dada Day, I, along with Greg Puchalski, Cathy Daley, Gary Judkins and Mike Obstarczyk, set out to shoot a videotape of "Dada" arriving at the airport, bus station, and train station (the old New York Central). I, as the character of news reporter Temple Stuart, welcomed the Dada pair (Puchalski and Daley) who were dressed in black leotards, beret, bowler, and a cardboard box with the letters DA for each representative. The airport security freaked, but ultimately we were able to shoot the entire piece without a hitch.

We exhibited neo-Dada mail art from around the globe, we dressed Dada, and asked attendees to bring a Dada dish to share: a peculiar potluck indeed. After the opening (and it was crowded, far more people than I would have expected on a cold Thursday in February), everyone grabbed a folding chair and viewed "Ghosts Before Breakfast," a 1927 Hans Richter film, followed by "Entr'acte," a 1924 film by René Clair. Following the films everyone was instructed to turn their seats 180 degrees and enjoy the interpretations [of musical works by Duchamp, Hugo Ball, and others] by UB's Creative Associates. A dog began barking during Eberhard Blum's spirited rendition of Kurt Schwitters' "Ursonate" (1923-32); although somewhat flustered by the canine improvisation, Blum managed to finish with a sanguine deliberation. Judy Treible and Joe Hryvniak videotaped the festivities. Due to the overwhelming crush of attendees, I announced

to the audience that the Dada destruction of artworks in a ritual pyre (artists were invited to “clean house” of works they wanted to destroy) had to be canceled, (although it) did indeed take place once the throng thinned out.

[This and subsequent quotes from a statement written for this publication.]

GARY JUDKINS : My studio was right next to where the Dada feast was held. I got up the next day and discovered this horrible smell. Pretty soon I found a vat of purple jello, and floating in it was a great big, slimy fish.



Dada Day, Feb. 5, 1976.
L-R: Greg Puchalski, Cathy Daley, Larry Lundy.

6. “NOISE”: THE FIRST REPORT CARD

HAL CROWTHER, “Ingenious Artistic Introspection,” *The Buffalo Evening News*, June 8, 1976: Much of the art produced at Hallwalls can be described as ephemeral. A crowbar, a broom and another layer of whitewash and it’s time to start over. That’s hardly a damning criticism. No one with any sense ever tries to define art anymore, but we all know it doesn’t have to be something you guard with a gun. ...

In the current group show of 30-odd resident artists at Hallwalls, there’s no feeling that the exhibitors are competing with each other for attention or commercial advantage. Hallwalls is something different. Nancy Dwyer will make a painter and Linda Brooks is certainly a photographer, but for once the whole is more interesting than the sum of its parts.

“We’re kind of cut off from the mainstream here, and we’re all more or less close,” theorizes artist Robert Longo. “In an isolated pocket like this, some strange permutations can occur.”

... The sense of an insular community amounts almost to group narcissism. Photographers study themselves and each other. The introspection might be suffocating if it weren’t so ingenious. ... At its best, Hallwalls art is a display of resourcefulness, an art dictated by limited space, materials, and outside encouragement.

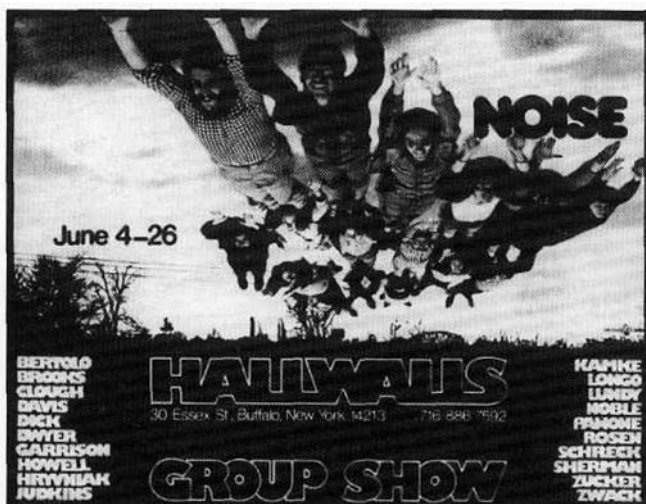
... “This show is a kind of report card for us,” said Longo. “Everyone knows we’ve been over here for a while, and they must wonder what’s been going on.”

NANCY TOBIN WILLIG, “‘Report Card’ Enjoyable,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, June 15, 1975: Robert Longo’s temple—a mini-Parthenon created from a myriad of columns—proclaims: “Seminal Helix in Reverse / The Culture Palace Does Not Want You.”

But you are welcome at Hallwalls ... [which] claims to be open Tuesday through Sunday, noon-9 p.m. If the door’s locked, try ringing the bell or yelling in the courtyard. Someone’s usually within earshot.

7. GROWING UP, LEAVING HOME

CHARLES CLOUGH: The funding agencies wanted to give the money directly to Hallwalls and not to Ashford Hollow. Ashford Hollow had its whole package and persona and operation and so on, and the funding agencies said, “If you want to survive you have to have a board. They were willing to string us along when we were cute and naive and all that stuff, but you get to a point ... it’s like growing up. We had to get our shit together.



KEVIN NOBLE: I remember helping to draw a Sol LeWitt wall drawing at Hallwalls and then a month later covering it up with layer after layer of white latex paint in preparation for the next exhibition. It was a time of questioning and analyzing the nature of art itself. Hallwalls and the artists associated with it were engaged in this on a daily basis. Everyone was making art and helping in the presentation of other people's art; the work and fun never stopped.

Of course, nothing remains static, particularly in the arts. The community and direction of Hallwalls was constantly changing as people left for New York, Chicago, and other places, and new artists became involved in showing work and helping to run Hallwalls.

CHARLES CLOUGH: Michael Zwack and Nancy Dwyer were the first to leave, and then Cindy got her NEA grant and she decided to split, and as soon as Robert heard that Cindy was leaving, he couldn't be left behind. ... It was kind of traumatic, because Robert had that sort of charismatic personality and I felt close to him. When he left I felt that I'd lost ... that co-conspirator kind of thing.

... We just wanted to be artists. [Hallwalls] was a way to deal with being in a provincial situation. I knew that I had to be in New York. It is so expensive, and it was so expensive. It was a circumstantial thing about my personal development, my resources, and these other talented people like Longo, Sherman, Dwyer, Zwack: trying to take these opportunities and use them. Using self-interest to generate lots of subsidiary benefits. ... I'm very interested in the front lines of cultural institutions and how they can serve the communities they're part of. It's like generating power from the Falls.

LARRY LUNDY: One morning after a particularly invigorating Artnight with Jonathan Borofsky, the living room wall had been magically transformed into a semi-abstract black marker drawing of a moose or a close-antlered facsimile. The graphic was certainly a focal point for years and eventually made the trip to 700 Main Street where it eventually faded and crumbled. *Ars gratia artis.*



Jonathan Borofsky beneath "Moose," the mural he executed in 1977, which was relocated when Hallwalls moved and survived until 1988.

8. THE SECOND GENERATION

BIFF HENRICH (photographer, director of CEPA at various points from 1978-82): I first came to Hallwalls in the winter of 1975-76 through Kevin Noble. Kevin and I were students at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester. He had come from Buff State where he had been a student with Longo, Clough, Bertolo, Sherman, Dwyer, Zwack, et al. The thing that made me check this out was that Kevin had decided to move back to Buffalo after 5 months and commute to Rochester, without a car, because "there are a lot more interesting things going on there (Buffalo) than here (Rochester)."

The presence of Hallwalls and the community of artists there made the decision to come to Buffalo and attend UB very easy. I already knew some of these people and moved into an apartment directly across the street. Instant connection. The thing that made Hallwalls different from the academic/workshop environments I had been in before was the synthesis of all forms and ideas of art. There was no departmentalization of disciplines and audience. It wasn't painting or sculpture or literature, it was art. Forms combined and changed and separated again and it was really irrelevant because the idea was the important part. I came to understand that good art is about ideas, and how those ideas are presented is secondary. This is not to say the artists who hung around Hallwalls (it is after all the artists who define Hallwalls' character or lack of it) were poor craftsmen. They were excellent. They could use their craft to promote their ideas.

[This and subsequent quotes excerpted from a statement written for this publication, November 1994]

KEVIN FIX (filmmaker, also known as "Ashmed Ramen" during the 1980s): I dropped out of school, defaulting on my loans. Totally defeated, I returned to Buffalo. Selling auto parts by day for a living, and drinking in Elmwood bars by night for survival, I would talk about weird films Media Study showed at UB. A fifteen minute film of dripping water in a sink, another with a forty-five minute zoom across someone's New York loft, or ones with color, or black and white frames which would flicker fast. Guys in gin mills talk only sports. They suggested I hang at this new West Side gallery, also a great place to party.

Everyone looked so cool socializing in the crushed stone courtyard outside Hallwalls, and here I am in my Salvation Army-issue polyester pants and fake silk floral pattern shirt with the fly-a-way butterfly collar, feeling quite the geek. I hovered on the perimeter of this arty summertime assembly, working up the guts to make eye contact with one of the black-attired chic. I followed this real mellow cat Kevin Noble upstairs where some of the artists lived.

These people could lay out a nice spread of munchies, with plenty to smoke and drink. I sensed a solid communal spirit, a happening in touch with the pulse of the current scene. Artists from New York were there all the time. Even on weekdays a bunch of people from the City would visit Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, or Charlie Clough.

Once Duchamp's "Green Box" was exhibited in the gallery downstairs. Master Marcel left a strange spirit in the air that night. The local TV stations sent a crew to cover the event. "It's about time they covered some news worth watching," I said to Ken Pelka from CEPA Gallery across the way.

I didn't see people sleep much there. Bob Longo hunched over his typewriter late at night, cranking out grants and letters. He managed to pump out photos and paintings along with all the other stuff he did. Charlie's room always smelled of turp, with long strips of canvas on the floor, his mattress over in the corner, a useless piece of furniture in the painterly decor.

Cindy Sherman's face comprised her canvas. Those transformations which would fill photo books, which she exhibited on sculpture stands, would start with a look she created on her face. Those black-and-white pictures predated the scenes she choreographed in front of slides. In one she portrayed a battered wife in a stairwell, eyeshadow streaming down her



Hallwalls Staff, 1979-80. Standing, L-R: Diane Bertolo (Exhibitions), Roger Denson & Kathy High (Film & Video), Donna Wyszomierski (Fiction/Diction). Seated, L-R: Laurie Neaman (Performance), Scott Rucker (Music), Debra Lary (Publicist), William Currie (Director).

cheeks. What a memorable, magic metamorphosis! At a party one evening, she colored her hair purple. I tried to be real cool and pretend not to notice, but I lost it and busted out laughing. That annoyed her and she walked away. That night I learned hip people aren't shocked at anything.

[Excerpted from a statement written for this publication, 1994.]

JOHN MAGGIOTTO (*visual artist, director of Hallwalls, 1978-79*): The first event I saw [when my contemporary art professor assigned my class to visit Hallwalls] was a performance work by Martha Wilson during the Blizzard of '77. Charlie and Robert were asking volunteers [from the class] to help out.

After graduation I made one visit to a corporate recruiter [but] I knew immediately that I wanted to work with the people at Hallwalls. Robert had left, so Charlie led me over to a filing cabinet, pulled open a drawer full of canceled checks and loose receipts and asked me to make sense of it for the grant reports. This would be my contribution; in return, Hallwalls showed me how to approach my photography with a more critical intent. I could no longer just take pictures; Hallwalls and CEPA presented a context in which to judge the progress of ideas. The library alone at Hallwalls was years ahead of the University's in regards to visual arts publications. I dropped my darkroom-based camera for the Polaroid SX-70 instant camera, and I pointed it at the dominant image source, television. Even today, the images on the plaster plates I make pass through a video screen first.

This and subsequent quotes culled from a statement written for this publication, 1995.

DEBRA S. LARY (*publicist, gallery assistant, and occasional bookkeeper for Hallwalls from 1979-81*): It's the feeling of Essex Street that resonates when I think back on those days: of the courtyard, of the upstairs apartment/office, of the downstairs apartments, of the loading dock entrance of the separate but physically attached gallery in the middle where fabulous art/performance unfolded and local punk and post-punk bands rooled the party scene.

I remember listening to Ramones, Blondie, and Talking Heads records upstairs in the ever-musty apartment; I remember people who meshed their play with their work, their life with their art; I remember the ever-cool Richard Henderson enlightening us all with a lecture-demonstration on cool music and synthesizers; I remember Patrick J. O'Connell (a former Artists Space staff member who became Hallwalls' director after the departure of Charles Clough), a good friend and my favorite date for crashing post-Albright-Knox-opening parties at the homes of rich patrons; I remember Charlie and Diane and Suzanne and Joe H. and Larry and John M. and Linda and Laurie and Kevin and Ken and Biff and David and Scott and Anne and Tony and Kathy and Bill and on and on and on.

I took a look through my calendar/diaries for the years in question, actually for 1977 (when I first became acquainted with Hallwalls/CEPA through my then-roommate Judy Treible) through a bit past my emigration to Canada in September '82. The calendars are heavily peppered with "Opening (substitute: performance, reading, visiting artist) at Hallwalls (substitute: CEPA)." I mean heavily peppered. I mean three to four entries a week, minimum, for all four years. No wonder my memory is blurred! What stand out most in my mind are the performances—Kathy Acker, Laurie Anderson, The Kipper Kids, Eric Bogosian, the late David Buchan (a.k.a. Lamonte del Monte), Robert Stewart (I even performed in his "Eternity Show" along with [Canadian video/performance artist] Berenicc), Lydia Lunch, Peter Gordon, David Van Tieghem, John Lurie, Glenn Branca, Y Pants.

[Excerpted from a statement written for this publication, 1994.]

ROGER DENSON (*critic, artist*): When I graduated [from Buff State] in 1978, Robert and Cindy had just left, and there were openings for program directors. I was working there when John Maggiotto was director. I don't think I had a salary, though, but I had a day job. Anne Turyn and I were program directors and Charlie Clough and Diane Bertolo were still doing a lot of exhibitions. Then in 1979, we first got funding for a visual arts curator, which Diane took over. I was curating film and video with Kathy High. Then in 1980, Diane no longer wanted to do the curating and I became exhibitions curator. So I was in charge of exhibitions from September 1980 through September 1982, but all along I had been co-sponsoring and organizing a lot of programming through the Buff State Visual Arts Board.

We used to have to go before the student government and fight for money for the arts, because the other students would want it for rock concerts or whatever. I was like this radical activist with long hair and I would form a coalition with

the theater people to get money. We would get about seven to ten thousand dollars, and about half the money we got would go for Hallwalls programming. Considering that there were two or three things going on every week, that wasn't a lot of money. We'd pay artists about 250 dollars and they'd sleep on our floors or whatever. Nobody was getting rich. I was pretty skinny and eating a lot of spaghetti.

At the beginning, I was really more on the outside. I used to joke with Diane much later and say "You bastards were so arrogant! You really used to lord it over us." Not so much Robert; he would always talk to you. I kept my distance, though, until the "second generation," which is John, Kathy High, etc. The fact that I was gay had something to do with it—not that they were homophobic or anything. I became friends with all of them, later, but initially I felt distant and envious. So I looked up to them, but I think I brought in things they didn't know about. I was a dancer then as well as an artist. Back then, dance had this phenomenal importance in terms of the visual arts, and later, film and video. Since nobody else would bring dance in, I did. But I was drawn to this collaborative philosophy they had, and after 1978, I was very much a part of it. At first, in their eyes, I was just this shy kid who didn't want to be part of it. I definitely had this ambivalence towards them.

First I was working with Anne Turyn, then Kathy High became very important. Tony Conrad was always more of a guide than anything else; because he was teaching he couldn't get too involved, but he would suggest important things to bring in. I was making trips to New York most of the time, with occasional trips elsewhere. I was pretty dependent on what critics and curators were talking about in New York, the press, both mainstream and marginal, and the network of other alternative spaces. People would tell me what was hot, and we would find out what was going on in other cities. There was a pretty diverse curatorial process, and everybody would contribute. There was also a heavy lobby by certain members of the staff who felt I was not paying attention to what they wanted. There were hints of a schism forming. They felt I was too mainstream because I was working with the Albright-Knox. The process was as diverse as possible, but you always have disagreements.

One thing I did was I introduced the catalogues. I didn't know it then, but I was a writer. I wasn't doing it to write the essays, it was more for the artist to have something to take away. We were doing them at around \$600 apiece; the most I ever spent was \$2500, but I always kept within my yearly budget. At first visual arts was getting the only funding, then separate funding came in for video and film.

Everything was a dialogue. I was the first one who stopped listening to what other people wanted. I was getting a lot of flack for not being communal and people thought the catalogs were too mainstream. We started getting more high profile press, but I started resenting all these ghosts hanging around. Tony Bannon was great about coming to shows and reviewing them, but he would always come back to the original members. He would talk to me and he was always supportive, but there was always this yardstick to measure against.

This and subsequent quotes excerpted from an interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994.

9. "HALLWALLS: FIVE YEARS": A WIDER AUDIENCE

MARCIA TUCKER (*Director of New York's New Museum when the touring show "Hallwalls: Five Years" opened there in 1980*): Hallwalls is an example of a growing phenomena throughout the country—informal, highly energetic and diverse artists' organizations. ... In the few years since their involvement with Hallwalls, many of these artists had their work seen in more public contexts, while the work of others is being shown outside of Buffalo for the first time. ... By providing an "alternate" museum context for this kind of work, we hope to bring it to the attention of a wider audience, thereby expanding and furthering our commitment to emerging artists and experimental work.

[Excerpted from catalogue statement, 1980.]

WILLIAM CURRIE (*Hallwalls director, 1979-86*): Since Hallwalls is not a museum with a permanent collection, its life and being has to be measured by the artists who have run the space and the artists who have over the years come to use it. ... It must be pointed out that a few of the works in the New Museum exhibition may not correspond with the reproduc-

tions found in this catalog. This is because Roger Denson has allowed each artist the opportunity to change their work as the exhibition goes from one gallery to another. Starting at Upton Hall Gallery, Buffalo (State University College at Buffalo), continuing to A Space, Toronto, and at present, the New Museum, New York City, many works have been pulled and replaced by newer pieces. ... In choosing artwork, Roger had to carefully balance contributions made by the artists to Hallwalls, as well as interesting works which would comprise a five-year retrospective.

[Excerpted from catalogue statement, 1980.]

WILLIAM ZIMMER, "Where Buffalo Roams," *The Soho News*, July 16, 1990: Let's take the wraps off the container and see what's inside. The work of the co-founders is near the entrance and signals another Hallwalls hallmark—animation. Robert Longo is in love with the movies, especially B movies, but he's also fond of the pure geometry of the suprematists and the nobility of Greek friezes. All combine in his reliefs of combat: in one here, two youths in jeans and short jackets grapple actively.

Charles Clough is an animated voyeur; his funnel-shaped paintings have a thousand eyes. Clough introduces another binding characteristic of Hallwalls art—the shorn-off, frayed look. ... Hanging near Clough are the photographs of Cindy Sherman, who is so enamored of the movies that she's cast her chameleon self into ersatz '50s movie stills. She's seen here posing at poolside and as a hitchhiker waiting at the bend of a road. That her photographs have neat black frames around them makes her stand out from the usual Hallwalls offhandedness.

The show radiates from this trio. Never have I seen so many photographic close-ups—of cheeks and chins, crooks of arms, a telephone receiver off the hook, a body leaning against a car, tin cups; a chain-link fence and plates of leftovers. (Could this passion for photography be explained by Buffalo's proximity to Rochester, home of Eastman Kodak?) Artists responsible for this list of intimacy include John Maggiotto, Laurie Neaman, Biff Henrich, Anne Turyn, Scott Rucker, and Tom Damrauer. Damrauer is a Pollock of the everyday who has photographed cut-up hot-dogs in smears of mustard and catsup, and melting ice cream larded with chocolate sauce—perhaps the remnants of a Hallwalls communal supper.

CARRIE RICKEY, "Babes on West Broadway," *The Village Voice*, July 9, 1980: The ideology shared by these artists, to judge from the catalogue and show commemorating Hallwalls' fifth anniversary, is one of youth and hunger. But their desire for artistic success, which motivates any artist co-op, is neither as politically committed as the feminism of the Woman's Building, Artemisia, and A.I.R., nor as socially conscious as Just Above Midtown's pledge to show work by young black artists. Hunger for success is not the same as malnutrition for artistic recognition.

... Their work is that of a collection, not of a collective. No one aesthetic or ideology dominates, and that's clear from the exhibition. It may also be why the show is so thin. Why organize a group show of a nongroup?

... For me, the best work is illegitimate heir to Pop Art's legacy: made by those who see both the commercial potential of fine art, and the aesthetic potential of commercial art. ... [Pieces by Longo, Dwyer, Zwack, and Ken Pelka] are all images from pop culture, and they're all beautifully executed. But empty. I think they're hybrids—progeny of pop and art—but a little embarrassed about their genotype. But being Pop in the high art domain is a battle waged and won a generation ago. In this work, however, the discomfiture is unresolved and serves to deplete, rather than energize, the art. My friend Ted describes the psychology of such art as the product of the TV-culture kids who believe an image can float without reason. Perhaps if the images were moored, contextualized, they'd have greater emotional impact. But these give off an apathetic effect, and are alienated from connections, narrative, and real space.

10. THE END OF A BEGINNING

KATHY HIGH (video artist, now editor of *Felix*): I suppose I was part of the third generation of people who worked at Hallwalls. There was still room to grow and do what you wanted. It was far from an institution at that point; it was more like a gift.

Bill Currie was the director for the bulk of the period when I was there. We would complain about Bill's lack of organization, but

Bill was a truly visionary director and we were lucky to work with him. I remember the heartfelt conversations we had. Bill would come and get me out of the equipment room and walk with me into the gallery speaking in his soft voice, hands clasped behind his back, head bowed in a slightly humbled posture. He would ask me about the video program: "How do you think things are going?" And then he would listen and pull out of me my most hidden ideas and dreams. We would circle the gallery while we quietly sketched the future of a video viewing room where people could act like couch potatoes and watch endless hours of videotapes. We even envisioned an editing room—someday in the distant future. Funny that everything he made me confess I wanted eventually came to pass.

[Excerpted from a statement written for this publication, 1995.]

ROGER DENSON: Bill Currie did more to keep [Hallwalls] alive than anyone else. He's got insights into what was going on that nobody else does. Bill was involved in every single bit of programming from 1978 to 1983.

LINDA CATHCART: What of the art of the artists who grew with and were nurtured by Hallwalls? We now have the occasion to look backward five years and see that the artists surrounded themselves with good, energetic ideas and that the quality of their own work is remarkably high. Hallwalls is made up of photographers, painters, sculptors, video artists, performers, dancers, Xerox artists, poets, writers, composers, filmmakers. The résumés of these artists are now 5-6 pages long where once they were very brief. Now they are nationally exposed—among them, Michael Zwack and Charlie Clough are now showing on 57th Street in New York City; Anne Turyn, Biff Henrich and Ellen Carey at P.S. 1; Ann Rosen at Franklin Furnace; Kevin Noble at the Kitchen; Robert Longo at Metro Pictures; Nancy Dwyer at the Drawing Center; Tony Conrad at the Filmmaker's Co-op; Diane Bertolo at Artists Space; and, on this occasion, all together at the New Museum.

People grow at different paces and it will be a long time before any of us, including the artists themselves, know what will come of this profession they have chosen, but each of them can know now that they participated in something which can be measured and judged today. Hallwalls is an organization which works and satisfies, which in itself is a good thing, but it is also one which questions, provokes, and provides more than it expects to. How and why? Partly due to time and place, but most importantly because of hard work, care, devotion, and love.

KATHY HIGH: I left Buffalo for nine months, and while I was gone the move [from Essex Street to 700 Main Street in 1980] happened. I was so glad to not be there! I kept getting reports from friends about faulty installation of the electrical wiring, massive amounts of dust from the dry wall, the exhaustive sanding of the floors. I was delighted to be away, but I was crushed to come back and find what had been a funky, cranky housing for Hallwalls had been replaced with long straight walls, square rooms and wooden floors downtown in the business section of town. I was crestfallen. Hallwalls had become an institution. It was the end of a beginning, and the beginning of new era.

JOHN MAGGIOTTO: After Hallwalls, I had the opportunity to work at the National Endowment for the Arts in the Artists Spaces (later Alternative Spaces, finally Visual Artists Organizations) program. I initially believed that all artist-run organizations around the country had circumstances similar to Hallwalls. This was definitely not the case. In Buffalo, we had the benefit of two supportive curators at the Albright, a major media center, photography center, and music center. Creative individuals were criss-crossing through town weekly. ... Today what I value most from my days at Hallwalls are the friendships I made. We looked, listened, and learned together. We're still learning.

BIFF HENRICH: People have asked me, "Why did Hallwalls happen here, in Buffalo, and why at that particular time?" My only answer has been that it was a freak occurrence, a coincidence of the right personalities with an abundance of talent, ambition, enthusiasm, naiveté, and persuasion skills arriving in one place about the same time. There weren't really many things like Hallwalls anywhere and no models to build from. The "network" was just developing and each place along the way invented its own wheel unlike any other wheel. Hallwalls' wheel is still unlike any other wheel because it has reinvented itself several times, and will probably do so again in the future. Different artists, different deal.

A TIME OF DISGUISES AND SECRET CODES

RICHARD HUNTINGTON

When I first encountered Hallwalls in 1978, I was fresh from the Pennsylvania Hills whose magnificent sunsets were supposed to blot out the memory of four dreary years in New York City watching minimalism wheeze its final wheeze. A lot was brewing at the edges of the New York art world in the mid-seventies, but I was too locked into mainstream art to pay much attention. So when I saw the young artists at Hallwalls push-pinning what looked to me like studio throwaways to the walls of an old ice house on Essex Street, I was puzzled and not a little disturbed. Despite my longstanding admiration for Duchamp I remained under the impression that paintings—and probably most sculptures—are made to be beheld, that they are governed by what Michael Fried solemnly called the “primordial convention” of the eye. To me, back then, the Hallwalls work appeared to be more of the same old tiresome story that had been repeated too often in those limbo years at the close of the decade: vaguely trained young artists of questionable talent straining mightily to appear to be out on the edge where devils fear to tread.

And, truth be known, a lot of this art seemed expressly designed to piss off the uninitiated viewer. It could be maddeningly fragmentary in its efforts to steer clear of every formalist nicety practiced by the designated foe, “museum art.” Purposely crude form and presentational techniques one step below the seventh-grade social studies project made one pine for a little ordinary craftsmanship. And for those outside the Hallwalls inner sanctum, much of this art projected the self-congratulatory tone of one perceptive enough to see who’s winning and smart enough to go over to the enemy just in the nick of time. But something else was going on that gave this art an exhilarating, almost destructive edge. Few who followed closely the work of those first five years could doubt that these artists were on to something big and bad and potentially explosive. In the Donald Barthelme short story, “Report,” a group of military engineers discover “a secret word that, if pronounced, produces multiple fractures in all living things

in an area the size of four football fields.” The Hallwalls artists seemed to have stumbled on a “secret word” of their own. In those early years the word hung over all Hallwalls exhibitions and insinuated itself into the work of its members, sometimes even those of more conventional tack. It seemed poised like a missile that might at any moment blow away all the fancy superstructure that had for so long sustained modernism and with it a whole culture of museum directors, dealers, curators, critics and artists—all of modernism’s fabled hegemony. It was, as Groucho used to say, a common word, one you’d hear around the house. The word was *consumerism*.

By intuition or design—helped along by close scrutiny of what was going on in New York City—these artists recognized that modernism was not merely an incomplete project but an essentially failed one, an idea that was by no means a given as the seventies came to a close. They recognized that the marketplace was driving culture and that it was driving art. And they went where the action was, finding impetus for their art in Punk culture, in Reaganomics, in advertising (without Pop’s distancing irony), in television, in questions of sexuality and gender, in racial identification, in some lamentable social condition—in anything but high visual art, which to these artists boded a nightmarish Greenbergian future where everyone would be forced to pay homage to the God of Inevitable Flatness and his Holy Mother, Righteous Opticality. Having spent half their years submerged in popular culture, these artists naturally enough found more of interest happening in Manhattan bars and clubs than in the galleries and museums. There was a shared sense among artists such as Cindy Sherman and Robert Longo and others who had already left Buffalo and Hallwalls for New York City that on some important level the artist’s “inner logic,” the private identity that had propelled artistic expression ever since the ancient Greeks, was defunct. Sherman fashioned her entire art around the simple notion that public and private identity were now hopelessly entangled. Longo looked for inspiration as much to B movies, corporate design and illustration

as to high art. Charlie Clough, who stayed on in Buffalo a little longer, watched television while he pieced together from magazine ads one-eyed creatures caught in tangles of paint like sci-fi monsters peering from a bog. Another creature-maker of the day, Larry Lundy, produced a band of featureless, cipher-like figures set in crude environments made from scraps of plastic sheets and other throwaway materials. A little while later, Diane Bertolo was giving isolated still-life objects the blank, uninflected look of the studious amateur painter. And I remember John Maggiotto, one of Hallwalls' directors in those years, photographing images directly from the TV screen with a Polaroid camera. Others borrowed the melodrama of soap operas or assumed the suave stance of the fashion illustrator. Still others took the cheesiest sorts of ads and, in an impulse that shared something with the impulse to add mustaches to posters, added crude drawing and handmade lettering. One thing was clear from this work: These children of television and advertising knew that they were no longer outside looking in from some privileged position upon mass culture. Consumerism was them, and—as this very art would help reveal—it was us, as well.

Although I wasn't about to admit it at the time, Hallwalls became for me a kind of socio-political remedial class on how to "de-valorize" high culture and how to rid oneself of old fashioned alienation to boot. Somewhere around 1980 Hallwalls had established itself—along with Media Study (then freshly installed in its own building on lower Delaware Avenue) and Essex Street neighbor and sometimes-co-conspirator, CEPA—as a top-notch proving ground for photographic/text/site works that mixed media with nonchalant ferocity and for ambitious video installations that often merged sight, sound and real and video space. The artists who were invited to visit in those years were among the most challenging and provocative then working in Manhattan—Vito Acconci, Jonathan Borofsky, Julian Schnabel, Sherrie Levine, David Salle, Carolee Schneeman, Dan Graham, Jennifer Bartlett, and many others. A little later a reinvigorated performance art dealt the fatal blow to my cherished "contemplative viewer," that imaginary passive being of the picture galleries. Who could sustain the sacred separation of art and audience in the face of Pat Oleszko's comic assaults or feign neutrality before such monumentally messy acts as The Kipper Kids, who would adorn themselves in condoms, stuff liver up their noses and splatter audiences with various liquified food-

stuffs? Hallwalls was making it harder and harder to maintain one's aesthetic distance.

To these young artists living through the tumble of art into the bottomless pit of commodity culture, the times must have seemed to offer a perverse kind of liberation. With all distinctions between high and low art obliterated the artist could, in theory, enlist cultural signs from anywhere. Commodity culture projects a heady sense of freedom in which all desires seem possible of consumption. For consumer society desire was a series of calculated public "seductions" acted out on TV screens and in the pages of magazines. This system of seduction was a language in itself, a language that always leads to excessive consumption.

It was into such a highly saturated situation that the Hallwalls artist attempted to insert art, that beleaguered activity that once seemed the source of the consumable that could never be consumed, the object that transcended objecthood. (The superheated art market of the eighties was to prove the frailty of these conceits.) Efforts to get a toehold in a culture that had no room for the "nonproductive consumption" (Bataille's term) that was art led to the endless string of "strategies" in which artists scrupulously shadowed the moves of advertising only to refute them by other means. I know that it must be an exaggeration of memory, but when I look back I see a time of disguises and secret codes, as though we were experiencing some extravagant serial *opera buffa* being played out in an art gallery. It was certainly true that the art often held a gleam of subversion somewhere beneath its blank, commodified face. Sometimes when I was amazed at the convoluted indirection of this art, I was reminded of the dissident Soviet artist compelled to weave in amid his enforced social-realist forms some secret message of protest. In less generous moments I recalled that in the 18th century the artists of the French court invented an elaborate private language of erotic signs designed for aristocrats who didn't want to share the titillating play of their pictures with the less privileged. To this day I'm not sure whether the art of Hallwalls' earlier years was the collective expression of pleasure in the forbidden fruits of consumerism or that it consisted mostly of brave acts of social criticism veiled in what were the necessary obscuring forms of the day.

Richard Huntington first observed Hallwalls from his vantage point as the art critic for the (now-defunct) Buffalo Courier-Express in the late 1970s. He is a painter himself, and served as Visual Arts Director of Artpark from 1982-85. He is currently the art critic for the Buffalo News.

1982-89: THE WONDER YEARS

(A PERSONAL VIEW)

STEPHEN GALLAGHER

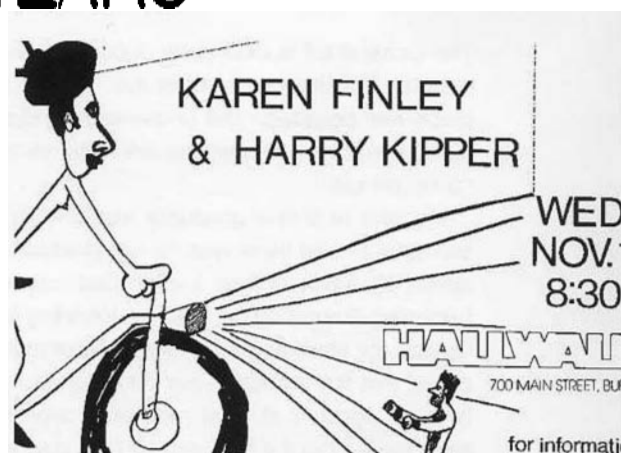
Within weeks of arriving in Buffalo in January '82, I found myself in an abandoned pool in the basement of Media Study/Bufalo repeatedly throwing this guy named Tony Billoni to the ground. It had snowed considerably since my arrival in what was surely the bleakest town I'd ever visited (except, perhaps, for Elmira), but Buffalo's legendary winter accumulations had nothing to do with my behavior. In fact, I was having a good time. So was Tony, I think.

We were on the set of a low-budget film, *You the Better*, directed by Ericka Beckman. She had dropped by Tony Conrad's filmmaking class at SUNY/Bufalo's Center for Media Study (CMS) a few days earlier to invite students to be extras in her movie. I was the only student who showed up. Among the other extras—most of whom I assumed were personal friends of Ericka or Tony Conrad—were Tony Billoni, Barbara Lattanzi, Chris Hill, Gary Nickard, Patty Wallace and Barbara Broughel.

In retrospect, my fate had been sealed for the better part of the next decade in that decrepit pool. I had met Buffalo's artworld intelligentsia (or so I came to find) and had wrestled them to their knees. In reality, I think I spent a good part of that late-night shoot on the floor myself, bruised and battered like a newly initiated gang member. But embellishment is a writer's prerogative. (And besides, this is not about me.)

I had only expected to stay in town for one semester. Eight years later I finally left. In the interim, I spent some of the best and worst years of my life to date. (Just another post-graduate slacker's story, you might be thinking. You may be right.)

Tony Billoni, it turned out, was the performance art curator at Hallwalls, Inc., a not-for-profit arts center located on Main Street in downtown Buffalo, and he invited me to see a show. I'd seen performance art before, in New York; I'd been to 8 B.C. and was a Sunday night regular at the Pyramid Club for "Whispers," a vaudeville-style cabaret hosted by a drag queen called Hapi Phace ("I'm Hapi and you're gay, and welcome to Whissssssssperrrrrrs!"), featuring Ethyl Eichelberger, John Sex, John Kelly, and The Lady



Detail from Performance program poster for Nov. 10, 1982 event. (See "Performance" chapter for more on Karen Finley.)

Bunny, among many, many others. I'd also attended most of the original Next Wave performances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. But nothing quite prepared me for my first night at Hallwalls.

After crossing a huge moat fronting the building—Main Street had recently been gutted for the construction of a mile-long rapid transit system—I took an elevator to a fourth-floor gallery space filled with folding chairs. The gallery's track lights had been turned in their mounts away from the art on the walls to illuminate a small area of the floor. The performers were all local; most performed straight readings. But two of Billoni's Kenmore buddies, George Scherer and Brian Szpakowski, appeared in diapers, conversing in an increasingly animated series of grunts and groans. Nevertheless, both the audience and the performers were in hysterics. Someone with a flashlight rushed to my side: "Don't lean against the wall. Watch the art!" "I am watching the show!" I screamed back. "What is this, enforced entertainment?" I remember thinking, and then I noticed a painting only inches behind my snow-covered parka.

Later that night, I saw George and Brian again, performing in a band at



Local performance night, 1981.

The Continental, a local punk club. There was definitely more to Buffalo than met the eye. On the surface, the place was deserted. But underneath, and especially at night, the town was seething with odd, eccentric, fascinating people.

As one of a few graduate students at CMS that semester (where there was no real graduate program to speak of), I was offered a stipended position teaching beginning filmmaking courses the following fall. I decided to stay for another year. I don't remember what happened that first summer—nor do I intend to give a blow-by-blow account of what transpired over the following eight years—but the following fall I did start teaching and regularly attending shows at Hallwalls.

Then, as now, Hallwalls—and neighboring CEPA Gallery—presented an incredibly diverse schedule of events: from performance art, experimental film, video art and music, to visual arts exhibitions, readings, lectures and slide shows. There was something interesting going on almost every night of the week and, at the time, nothing cost more than two dollars to attend. (For a \$15 membership, most events were free!) Yet, I was often one of only a handful of people in the audience. And although I came to cherish the intimacy of those evenings, befriending a small group of like-minded enthusiasts and meeting scores of incredible artists one-on-one, I could never understand why more people didn't take advantage of Hallwalls' programming.

Growing up in the Bronx, I often went to art events in Manhattan, and generally felt like an outsider, a "bridge-and-tunneler," one of hundreds in a crowd; an audience member, not a member of a community. Hallwalls, on the other hand, was a community of artists—and always had been, originating in the communal living space of its artist-founders—and visiting artists (and curious visitors) were quickly absorbed into the fold.

Sometime in the fall of '82, at the instigation of Tony Billoni, I presented an evening of my own work at Hallwalls: films, videos, and an untitled multimedia performance piece featuring Mitzi Smyntek. In the spring of '83, I presented another piece, "Life of Linnaeus: Ad Hoc," in which I revealed a secret talent for Irish dancing. Despite these public displays, I wasn't particularly interested in becoming a performance artist, but Hallwalls offered frequent opportunities to participate, access to equipment, and, sometimes, a paycheck—each of which I eagerly exploited. I also showed my Super-8 films at regular open screenings organized by Barbara Lattanzi, and contributed paintings, photos, and mixed

media work to members' exhibitions in the gallery space. In fact, I had probably presented work in every conceivable medium by the time I left Buffalo. Mind you, not all of it was any good: once, on a dare, I performed on piano accordion (I don't play) together with Tony Billoni (on rusty saxophone) on a bill with a dozen hardcore bands! (An unintentional tribute to John Cage, the audience's heckling was simply incorporated into the piece.) It wasn't art, but it was playful, irreverent, risky. (After all, if you came for the hardcore show, we were a waste of your time.) Billoni encouraged this kind of risk.

Entertainment, however, was always tempered by discussion, analysis and dialogue; Hallwalls' curators, who were artists in their own right, fostered intelligent discussion about current trends in the arts, Hallwalls' role in the artworld, and more importantly, its role in the local community. Their programming often reflected these concerns, as well as their own, often idiosyncratic, personalities. The overall gestalt of the space was multifaceted and complex, yet extremely accommodating.

For instance, in the '82/'83 season alone, Tony Billoni presented (if memory serves me) Mike Kelley, Eric Bogosian, Ann Magnuson, Boris Policeband, Gerard Little, and The Kipper Kids with Karen Finley, among many other shows. These performances were usually one-night stands, and the gallery space in which they were staged would have to be restored, and exhibitions often rehung, to open to the public the next morning. The following evening might feature a film or video screening, music performance, reading, slide show or discussion with artists, writers and musicians of equal interest. It would not, therefore, have been unusual for an expres-



Ann Magnuson in *After Dante*, Mar. 19. 1983.

sionist performance by Karen Finley to be succeeded by a discussion with Sherrie Levine—a then-controversial “appropriationist” photographer—about postmodernism. Subsequent days, in turn, might feature Super-8 films from a divided Germany, videos from Latin America, or a reading by Kathy Acker or Gary Indiana. The mix was always astounding, the caliber of artists high, the discussions lively, the parties kicking.

Of course, you had to go to Hallwalls or CEPA quite frequently to experience this mix. And I did. By winter of '83, I decided Hallwalls was clearly more interesting than graduate school, so I “enrolled” full time and bought a membership. The following season, Tony Billoni decided to move on and invited me to replace him.

I had come to town to study film; now I had an opportunity to become a performance art curator. I suppose stranger things had happened to me. I was, after all, a jaded, queer New Yorker with a degree in biology, studying experimental film in Buffalo with two of the most eccentric people I'd ever met (Paul Sharits and Tony Conrad), teaching beginning film classes to students not much younger than me, and living in a bedroom rented from a lonely, adopted, middle-aged dental lab technician whose favorite pastime was singing and recording original songs in the living room: “Got no mother. Got no father. I'm alllll aloooooone!” (I flossed in fear, and snuck boys in and out my bedroom window. Then I moved, far across town.) I already knew that life was far stranger than fiction, so I jumped right in and took the job. Besides, it was only part-time.

That part-time job—which soon subsumed my entire life—paid \$1,500 for the season, and included a budget of less than \$10,000 with which to program. Only the Exhibitions program had a bigger budget; Film, Video, Music and “Fiction Diction” had even less. I marveled at how much Tony had been able to do with so little money and tried to live up to his reputation. But I had no experience managing a budget, and knew little about theatrical lighting, sound systems, etc.

Bill Currie, Hallwalls' mild-mannered executive director, shepherded me through the administrative part of the job and kept my wild ideas in check; my colleagues—especially Barbara Lattanzi (film), Don Metz (music), and Chris Hill (video)—helped me with the technical aspects. Together, we struggled to make our work at Hallwalls meaningful.

At the time, Hallwalls' reputation was still rooted in its

near-mythic origins in a former ice-factory. And while Hallwalls' curators—most of whom were new that season—were genuinely indebted to Robert Longo, Charlie Clough, and the scores of artists who had built Hallwalls into the institution we inherited, we also strove to distance ourselves from the past.

Every Tuesday at 10 a.m. the entire staff would sit in a semi-circle around the office and talk for hours. Often exasperating, these staff meetings inevitably focused on Hallwalls' mission: What did it mean to be an “alternative” space in the '80s? What was Hallwalls an alternative to? How could we reach larger audiences without compromising our mandate to serve “new and emerging”—i.e., unknown—artists? How had the artworld changed, and how had those changes affected us? Week after week, the same discussions were elaborated upon exhaustively. Nothing was sacred, everything was questioned.

(A few years later, for example, the staff collectively recommended that Alan Sondheim be hired to the newly-created position of Artistic Director on the basis of his proposal to metaphorically “explode” Hallwalls' physical space—thus saving considerably on rent—and instead, to exclusively exploit virtual space by way of fax machine, modem, and the mail. Needless to say, Alan lasted one season and the gallery remains Hallwalls' physical centerpiece and anchor. Perhaps he was just ahead of his time: today, with CD-ROMs and the Internet, and systems like Mosaic and Kaleidospace in place, art exhibitions can effectively be staged on-line, although the Net is not likely to usurp the economy of art objects anytime soon.)

Nevertheless, we were sympathetic to Alan's proposal because it was an outgrowth of post-structuralism, which was then very much in vogue, and which questioned the status of the “original” artwork. We also recognized the value of Hallwalls' monthly calendar, exhibition catalogues, and publications such as *Top Stories* and *Angle of Repose*—and later, *Blatant Artifice*, *Picture This*, *Reviewing Histories*, *Young, British & Black*, and the LP “Record Without a Cover,” by Christian Marclay, to name a few—which reached a much larger audience than even the best-attended events at Hallwalls could.)

As Billoni was discovering near the end of his tenure, the Performance Program had outgrown Hallwalls' fourth-floor gallery. There were simply fewer and fewer site-specific performers requiring only a raw space and

"The alternative gallery is currently trapped within a set of contradictions: espousing a free field for art and its free dispersion, on one hand—concepts inherited from the upheavals of the 1960s and 70s—and facing a restricted economy, as well as an alienated audience, on the other hand. [...] The alternative gallery, especially today, exists only in relation to late capitalism; it is defined by late capitalism, and is danger of succumbing. It must rely on a board; on private funding. To the extent that it is concerned with art as critical activity—art which carves into the common assumptions of mass or corporate culture—it is in a disastrous situation financially, culturally, and psychologically.

[...] Under these circumstances—these confluences of contradictory tendencies fueled by capitalism but marginal to the capitalist economy—the best that can be hoped for is a transformation of the alternative system into a dispersion. [...] Alternative spaces would disappear, replaced by organism, network, even 'cottage art.' The space of art itself must explode; the sooner the concept is eliminated, the better."

—Alan Sondheim, "Sequences,"
Art & Artists, March/April 1986

few props. A new generation of performers—the bastard children of Laurie Anderson and Robert Wilson, so to speak—were predominantly interdisciplinary in nature, incorporating dance, music, spoken text and multi-media components in their work. Increasingly theatrical, these shows required days of set-up and rehearsal time; there was simply no way they could be staged in the gallery. (Although, to his credit, Billoni pulled off an incredibly complex show by Ann Magnuson in the gallery with only an hour's setup and rehearsal. Then, of course, he retired.)

We continued to present work in the gallery when it was modest enough to fit, but we also began to co-sponsor events with Media Study/Buffalo (such as Yoshiko Chuma's "A Night at the Millionaire's Club") to use their large soundstage, and for one season we staged performances at the Italian American Community Center, a kitsch "dinner-theater" that perfectly suited work originating in New York's club scene.

Also around this time—and here's where the years begin to blur, one into another, until I was no longer young—Barbara Lattanzi decided to leave the Film Program. The technical demands on the institution necessitated the hiring of a Technical Director, and Barbara assumed that position full-time. I was eager to program film, and for a while thereafter I programmed both film and performance at Hallwalls.

The Film Program at that time was small and self-contained; a single 16mm and Super-8 projector and a pop-up screen were adequate for the exhibition of experimental films, which rarely exceeded one reel. (When they did, the audience took a beer break while the reels were changed.)

One of the earliest and most ambitious programs I undertook was Hallwalls' (and perhaps Buffalo's) first gay and lesbian film festival. I knew that gay and lesbian film festivals in other cities attracted huge audiences, and I expected that this event would, too. Hallwalls' gallery simply wasn't large enough to accommodate the crowds we hoped would materialize. With the help of Bill Currie and Jim Rolls, a lawyer and member of Hallwalls' Board of Directors, we were able to secure two nights at the Tralfamadore, a neighboring upscale jazz club.

The festival, in keeping with the traditional bent of Hallwalls' Film Program, was comprised largely of experimental films, and the highlight of the fest was a tribute to Barbara Hammer, a legendary dyke director. The first night went off without a hitch, attracting a large, rather mainstream gay audience that seemed mystified by the unusual fare being served up, but who responded politely nonetheless. (The audience was clearly more excited by the unprecedented nature of the event than by the work itself.)

But the following morning we received a call from the Buffalo Police Department's "Salacious Literature" squad in response to a complaint (apparently from a waitress at the Tralf) that we were screening pornographic material. They demanded to pre-screen films scheduled for the second evening. Barbara Hammer, whose work had not yet been screened, insisted that they watch her films.

One of Barbara's films from the '70s depicted naked women and their children in the country; they formed a huge circle in a field and danced around—

clearly some kind of communal celebration of Mother Earth. The gents from the SL squad politely watched this and other films from the evening's program. Afterwards, they expressed concern about the children in Barbara's film. "Whose children are they?" they asked. "And what are those women doing with them?"

If Barbara was incensed, she kept her cool. "What do you *think* they're doing with them?" she asked. (Clearly, the SL squad's collective imagination was far more prurient than Barbara's rather benign film.) Despite her quite rational explanation—"those women are their *mothers*"—the SL squad insisted that if we screened Hammer's work that evening the event would be shut down and we would be arrested. We screened them anyway to a large and receptive crowd, and nothing happened.

The event was a great success. But we also realized that programming outside Hallwalls' cloistered space was risky indeed. On the one hand, experimental films are an acquired taste, and in Buffalo there was only a small, albeit devoted, audience for this work. On the other hand, we were not willing to water down Hallwalls' programs in order to mollify "mainstream" audiences. Reaching a new public would certainly be a struggle. (And little did we realize at the time what our brush with censorship would augur for not-for-profit spaces and artists in the decade that followed.)

But a new wave of (in many cases, heretofore experimental) filmmakers—James Benning, Bette Gordon, Amos Poe, Michael Oblowitz, Beth and Scott B, Sheila McLaughlin and Lynne Tillman, among others—were beginning to produce 16mm feature films. They were clearly adopting a theatrical format in order to reach larger audiences, and for Hallwalls to present these "new narratives" properly it became imperative that we upgrade our equipment: minimally, two projectors and a change-over system were needed. (A theater would be nice too, but this seemed like wishful thinking. We could always co-sponsor with Media Study/Buffalo or SUNY at Buffalo — or try to rent the Traf again! — to get these films seen.) As good fortune would have it, however, Hallwalls was the recipient of a city "block" grant, part of which was subsequently allocated for the acquisition of new equipment. And then, sadly but fortuitously nonetheless, Media Study/Buffalo folded.

Media Study had been our well-established, well-funded neighbor to the south, a few blocks deeper into

downtown Buffalo. When they shut their doors, we were compelled to fill the void they left behind. Luckily, NYSCA felt the same way; Hallwalls' film and video programs were allocated substantial increases in funding for the following season; the film program's annual budget skyrocketed from something like \$5000 to something like \$60,000, over the course of just one year. Both Chris Hill and I took on more full-time responsibilities, and our salaries increased as well.

We were clearly positioned to expand into a second space, and eventually we did, leasing a former fur storage vault on the second floor of the same building at 700 Main Street—although I think the expansion into The Vault was primarily undertaken to circumvent building code violations (the fourth floor was not coded for "stationary" audiences) so that we could receive our block grant, and not necessarily to accommodate Hallwalls' growing programs. *C'est la vie.*

The Vault gradually solved a lot of our problems, even as it created an entirely new set of its own. The renovation, as I remember it, was hell. But we all pitched in and gutted that windowless, cork-backed-concrete space. Brendan McCarthy and I built tiered seating platforms based on a design Biff Henrich came up with, and we even constructed a makeshift projection booth of our own design. (The booth, I must admit, was pathetic, although I couldn't have been prouder of our achievement at the time.) Barbara Lattanzi meticulously equipped the space, diplomatically balancing the needs of the programs with the requisite three bids required by the block grant and a finite budget.

The Performance program was now wired for theatrical lighting. The Film program had a (somewhat sound-proof) booth with two 16mm projectors and a new screen. Audiences finally had a sightline, although the tiered platforms squeaked and those sitting on the top levels risked their lives if they leaned too far back. We were getting neon signage on the side of the building, and we had reasonable budgets with which to program this new, albeit extremely raw, space. We also began calling ourselves a Contemporary Arts Center. (Ah, the Reagan years.)

After our first season in The Vault, I turned the Performance program over to Ron Ehmke and concentrated solely on film. (For a time, though, I also designed Hallwalls' calendars, eager to improve their role in publicizing, rather than just listing, events.) Across the board,

Hallwalls' programming began to reach larger audiences and to accommodate a wider range of artists; and the kinds of work we could present were no longer (as) limited by the space and its physical constraints.

Over the next few years I experimented with a wide variety of programming strategies to reach new audiences, attract mainstream press coverage, to educate myself, and often ... well, just for the hell of it. I organized one-night stands, thematic series, extended runs, publications, and touring film exhibitions; and often worked with guest curators, or co-sponsored events with other institutions, or with other programs within Hallwalls. I even organized another gay and lesbian film festival: this time in The Vault, pairing experimental shorts with narrative feature films. (It was far more risqué than the previous fest, and attracted a large, receptive crowd. No one thought to invite the guys from the SL squad.)

This was Hallwalls' expansionist era, a period in which the organization's national profile and its contacts (with artists, other spaces, and funding agencies) grew significantly. We were able to accomplish much more than Longo, Clough, and their mythic colleagues had ever set out to do. They created a place where they could produce and exhibit art, and exchange ideas with other artists. We built a public institution that served those ends, but which was considerably larger and therefore answered to the input of many more, often conflicting constituencies.

As for myself, I simply stopped producing my own work after a while; I had become a full-time arts administrator. At the time I felt a great deal of anxiety about the sacrifice I thought I was making. (Perhaps the unfortunate Thatcher-like regime that swept into Hallwalls made working there seem less fulfilling.) Now, however, I'm convinced you stumble down the path that excites, motivates and rewards you, and I have gotten a great deal of satisfaction out of curating, programming and packaging events — in Buffalo, both at Hallwalls and with Tony Billoni's How To Have Fun Productions, and later in New York and elsewhere as a freelance curator and fledgling film producer.

I eventually turned the Film Program over (since there were still no real job searches in those days) to Jürgen Brüning and Andreas Wildfang, co-curators from West Berlin's artist-run cinema collective Kino Eiszeit. It was a break with tradition to hire "outsiders," but I thought the local community would benefit from their international experience and connections. And by all accounts, they did.

During the years I worked there, both Hallwalls and its audiences grew—in part, a result of the organization's maturation and the commitment of its staff. But much of its subsequent growth, like that of most other non-profit arts organizations, was in response to mandates from federal and state funding agencies to "professionalize" its administration and to "diversify" its audience base. In fact, as this personal account illustrates, Hallwalls had been doing this for some years at the initiative of its curators—who naturally preferred to receive regular and larger paychecks and to draw bigger audiences for their events.

The state's mandates, on the other hand, required the organization to take on more administrative overhead and build its board until it resembled an undercapitalized commercial corporation. Subsequently, Hallwalls, like many other non-profits, would spend more and more time raising monies to support its increased administrative overhead, and less and less money presenting art. Efforts to "diversify" audiences through "community outreach" and education, with an already diminished pot of money for programming, were often doomed from the start, because those were the things we were least equipped to do. (After all, we never set out to be an educational center.)

I do not mean to imply that Hallwalls' curators were not passionate in their commitment to outreach and to building a community of artists—they were and are. But what I find amazing is the constant struggle non-profit art spaces have had to negotiate over the past decade between survival and collapse, purposefulness and routine, community and corporation. Some of the issues spaces like Hallwalls have confronted over the past decade are merely a reflection of changes in the world at large—events like the Gulf War and an economic recession impact on all facets of society. But others, like multiculturalism and political correctness, have entered the cultural discourse through the academy and through narrow-minded funding mandates that influence less what is created or exhibited than what is censored, suppressed, discouraged, and abandoned.

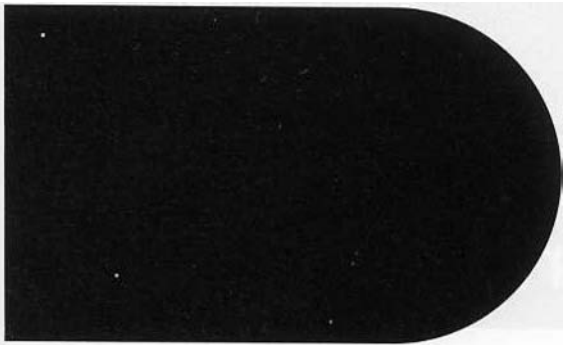
Stephen Gallagher curated the Performance program at Hallwalls from 1984-86 and the Film program from 1984-89. In subsequent years he worked at the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Kitchen; he is currently the Managing Editor of Filmmaker. He is also an independent producer and has guest-curated film series in Germany, Finland, Egypt, and elsewhere.



Dancenoise (L-R: Anne Tobst, Lucy Sexton)
in March 1988 calendar. Design: Paul Szp.

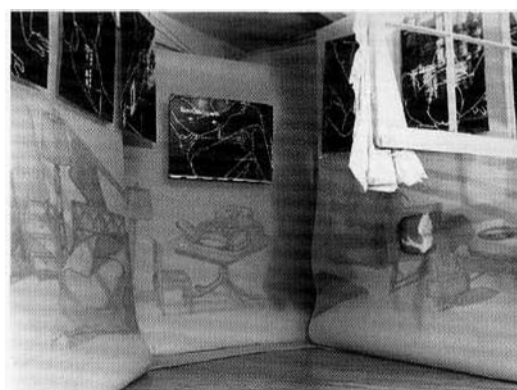
"Our best mechanism was this import/export function; we wanted to bring in whatever we were interested in, whatever we thought was cool. You sniff it out, you go find it, you eat it, and then you ARE it. Culture consumption."

-Charles Clough, interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994



12 EXHIBITIONS

ELIZABETH LICATA



Motives, 1984: installation view of work by Kathy High.

It is tempting as it is to package the last 20 years of Hallwalls' exhibition programming into one coherent (albeit totally inaccurate) summary, that's not what this essay is about. Nor is this a brag sheet, listing all the artists who went on to illustrious careers, fame, and fortune thanks to the support and prescience of Hallwalls (although that did happen). In this strange 20 years—as good a period as any to illustrate the false linearity of art historical practice—the art world and Hallwalls witnessed the last gasps of Minimalism, the development of appropriation and mass-media-related strategies, the rise and fall of the East Village scene, the growth of activist collaborations, and the continuation and revitalization of Conceptual art. Add new initiatives in both representational and abstract painting to this list and the difficulties of credible summation become clear. Even within the relatively limited space of 20 years, art won't arrange itself as neatly as we'd like it to.

The curators and artists involved with Hallwalls weren't really interested in neat arrangements or logical progressions. While commercial galleries manipulated trends, presenting artists in the context of newer, bigger, better investment speculations, the mission of the Hallwalls curators was much simpler. They tried to find artists who were not being represented in the marketplace. They also placed the work of artists who were represented commercially in contexts which emphasized aspects other than art's attractiveness as a commodity. (What happened to this work in the commercial networks later, or even concurrently, was an inevitable consequence of dominant capitalist enterprise.) Hallwalls curators gave artists the chance to develop new installations, they gave guest curators the chance to develop new ideas for exhibitions, and they encouraged the inclusion of other disciplines such as performance, writing, and video. There is no one "typical" Hallwalls exhibition, but there are types of exhibitions: single artist installations, thematic group shows, artist residencies, guest-curated shows, collaborations with other institutions, and collaborations with other programs.

It seems as good a strategy as any to focus on individual evocative examples of this programming, avoiding the promiscuous laundry list as well as the elitist top 10 list. What follows are 11 personal and subjective selections from 20 years of Hallwalls exhibition programming plus one outside exhibition, starting with 1976 and ending with 1994. As the list progresses, it will become clear that these selections represent not just exhibitions, but the changing attitudes and priorities of the curators. Each one has had a distinct vision of how to go about a task which has never been adequately defined.

"We Just Wanted to be Artists:" *Approaching Painting* 1976

During the Clough/Longo years, Hallwalls programming focused on framing Buffalo activity in the larger context of the national mainstream. Once the gallery became established within the orbit of the known art world it could also become a launching pad. In the three-part *Approaching Painting* exhibition series, founding artist Charles Clough (there was no curator system in the early years) carefully balanced a mixture of established artists—Robert Manigold, Sol Lewitt, Lynda Benglis—with some new names like Judy Pfaff and John Torreano. A number of these artists visited for residencies and lectures, thus creating new lines of communication and new audiences. As Clough states with characteristic bluntness, "We thought we'd have an audience because we'd had all these visiting artists up. It's obvious if you do a show in some city and nobody knows you, then nobody's going to come to your show." The *Approaching Painting* shows were more than just a positioning strategy, however: as a painter, Clough was interested in the burgeoning of painting styles that rejected Minimalist practice. Over the years, every Hallwalls curator held similar shows, testing the seemingly unconquerable resilience of painting.

Sidebar: *Pictures at Artists Space* 1977

Pictures was not a Hallwalls exhibition, but is cited by most observers as a seminal show for the rethinking of representation seen in the early work of founding Hallwalls artists Robert Longo, Michael Zwack, and Cindy Sherman as well as in the work of associated artists like Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, and Sherrie Levine. Exhibition organizer Douglas Crimp wrote essays in *October* (1978) and *Flash Art* (1979) which explained his concept of "picture-using" artists, greatly increasing the notoriety and marketability of "Pictures" artists, whether they were in the original exhibition or not. The movement coalesced in the formation of Metro Pictures gallery in 1981. For a large portion of the art world, the term Hallwalls is still inextricably associated with the "Pictures" phenomenon and the Longo and Sherman names. Although the accuracy of this characterization has been practically nil for years, early celebrity through association helped establish Hallwalls' reputation.

Defining a Moment: *Figures: Forms and Expressions* 1981

Both Charles Clough and subsequent Hallwalls curator G. Roger Denson successfully collaborated with the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo on exhibitions of artists such as Raphael Ferrer, Charles Simonds, Judy Pfaff, and Jennifer Bartlett. These collaborations made it possible to publish catalogues and have multi-site exhibitions as well as encourage general cross-pollination of audiences, publicity, and funding. Most important, the curators were able to work together, combining their different methodologies for identifying interesting work. The series culminated in *Figures: Forms and Expressions*, an exhibition which referenced the figure as a common vehicle for expression in the work of a very diverse array of artists. Held at Hallwalls, the Albright-Knox, and CEPA, the exhibition introduced the work of Transavantgarde artists Francesco Clemente and Sandro Chia to Buffalo audiences as well as presented work by emerging artists such as Ellen Carey, Laurie Simmons, and John Ahearn. The Albright-Knox collaborations were viewed with ambivalence by some Hallwalls staffers, who felt that they were wedded to the Buffalo establishment and the commercial gallery scene. As an alternative space exhibition, *Figures: Forms and Expressions* may not have been groundbreaking, but as a museum collaboration, it was an innovative way of addressing the figurative renaissance of the '80s. Ten years later, Denson still stresses *Figures: Forms and Expressions* as a pivotal exhibition: "There were heated battles over the Albright collaborations but they were some of the best things we ever did. Our audience expanded so much because of them. When we did *Figures: Form and Expressions*, the transavantguardia was just beginning to be shown in New York. The people into conceptual art were threatened, but I was more interested in the whole picture."

Group Strategies: *Motives* 1984

Group shows at Hallwalls have always been surrounded by tension. The artists might be good individually but look terrible together, or the concept might be excellent, but not all the choices might be appropriate. Claudia Gould, who served as Exhibitions curator in 1982-83, was more interested in identifying and presenting interesting work than in establishing a thematic umbrella, but with *Motives*, organized with CEPA and the Albright-Knox, she succeeded in constructing a believable conceptual structure as well as bringing together consistently powerful work. The artists of *Motives* were united in questioning societal norms and power structures. Video installations by Kathy High and Eva Buchmuller/Squat Theater were combined with mixed-media work by Christy Rupp and Doug Ashford, photography by Jennifer Bolande, paintings by Jane Dickson, and drawings from Joseph Nechvatal. This



Motives, 1984: installation view of works by Jane Dickson at Hallwalls.

diverse range of formal strategies became surprisingly invisible throughout the exhibition. While other presenting spaces often had problems with combining traditional and electronic media, ghettoizing either one or the other, *Motives* was one in a long line of presentations which demonstrated the unswerving commitment of Hallwalls' staff to innovative installation techniques, regardless of media. The work of Colab members Rupp, Ashford, Dickson, and Nechvatal assumed a new formal autonomy outside of the often raucous context of group politics, while the multi-media installations created compellingly ominous environments. During her short tenure as curator, Claudia Gould organized a number of other important exhibitions, including installations by Mike Kelley (1983) and video artist Barbara Lattanzi (1983). She took her Hallwalls experience and contacts to subsequent positions at P.S. 1 and Artists Space.

Just Showing the Work: Nadin, Paterson, Winters 1984

Like Gould, Robin Dodds, who was at Hallwalls from 1983 through 1985, often grew impatient with the need to theorize about exhibitions. She was also a rigorously self-critical presenter whose group shows were developed through a process she calls "editorial synthesis." Although Dodds organized ambitious conceptual shows such as 1984's *Objectivity*, including works by Marilyn Minter, Haim Steinbach, Jeff Koons, and Alan Belcher, she also focused on less sensational but equally compelling presentations such as three concurrent installations by painters Peter Nadin, Toni

Paterson, and Robin Winters. Through various ways of presenting representational imagery, the painters found subtle tensions and combinations, pointing the viewer toward these juxtapositions through salon-style presentation (Paterson and Nadin) or through dynamics within the individual work (Winters). Dodds was also committed to using the resource presented by Western New York's artist community. She founded an Artist Advisory Board and gave "regional" artists major presentations such as Paterson's in this show. Dodds came to Buffalo with a prepared list of shows which she had been able to pull together thanks to her former experience as a former New Museum staffer and her on-going scrutiny of the flourishing '80s scene. Once she got to Buffalo, however, she realized that much more was needed than a list of shows. "I had my own little plans for exhibitions, and those kind of worked out the way they would have in a vacuum," she recalls. "We changed it so that a local artist had a real gallery every period. I was hoping that that would make the local community more interested in the organization. The other thing that did have an effect although it wasn't visible was starting the Artist Advisory Board. And that was very difficult in a way, because you didn't know whether or not to let the artists run the institution."

Surrendering Authority: *Double Vision* 1988

The guest curator program, instituted in 1985, provided a way to support non-mainstream curatorial voices as well as alternative artistic expressions. It funded a catalogue and essayist as well as the usual exhibition expenses, but, most significantly, it greatly expanded Hallwalls' reach into a wider range of artist communities and audiences. Fred Wilson, who later became known for his own installation projects, brought together 10 non-Western artists (Howardina Pindell, Tyrone Mitchell, Emily Cheng, Eugenio Espinosa, and others) whose largely abstract work contained subtle references to their inherited cultures. The exhibition looked very unlike the usual flat-footed attempt at "multiculturalism," and later traveled to the Longwood Gallery in the Bronx. Other guest curators in this series included Bradley Eros, Rene Riccardio, Carl Hazelwood, and Michael Osterhaut. The Eros *Metabody* exhibition was perhaps the most bizarre of the series, celebrating



Tyrone Mitchell: *Home*, 1987, from *Double Visions* catalogue, 1988. Photo: John Berens

sex, death, science, and excess, through a variety of multi-media and performative strategies, including a nude egg-tossing event. Painter Catherine Howe, Hallwalls curator in 1985-89, cites the guest curator program as essential to her programming philosophy, commenting, "That's the really good thing about being an artist/curator, because you never feel real territorial about your shows, your ideas. You want to let go because your primary identity is as an artist."

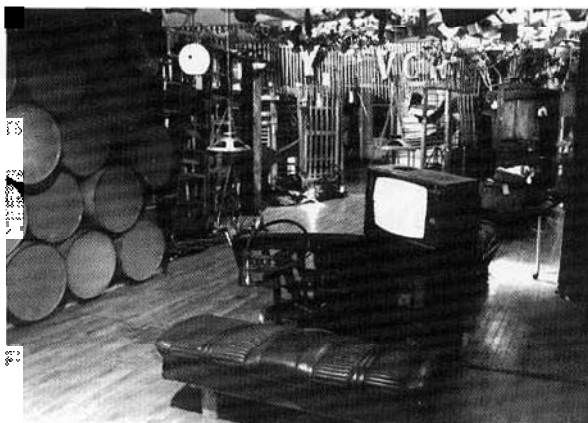
Installation Poetics: *Esprit de l'Escalier* 1988

Although she had appeared in group shows at Hallwalls (*Poetic Resemblance*, 1986) before this installation, Barbara Bloom was not represented by a gallery when Catherine Howe organized *Esprit de l'Escalier*. Through the National Endowment for the Arts Interarts program (now discontinued), Howe was able to get extra funding for three large installations involving multimedia by Bloom, John Jesurun, and Ericka Beckman. Bloom's elegant sculptural meditation on the paranormal was multi-chambered, including intense areas of blue light, floating hats, printed dinner plates, and a series of watermark papers installed in lightboxes.

The work was later installed at the 1988 Venice Biennale where it won first prize in the Aperto. The three installations involved considerable rebuilding of the gallery as well as complicated electronic hardware—few other spaces of Hallwalls' size and staff limitations would have tried to do all three at the same time.

Trashing the Place: *Salvage Lounge* 1988

Probably one of the most user-friendly pieces of programming Hallwalls ever sponsored, the *Salvage Lounge* residency/installation brought video artist Rob Danielson and sculptor Terese Agnew (both from Milwaukee) into the Buffalo public arena. The installation was the result of five weeks of interviewing and hunting/gathering through Buffalo streets, turning the central galleries into a vast rugged terrain of junk, filled with videotaped voices and faces. Visitors were invited to participate in the installation process as part of the residency, establishing a tradition which was duplicated with the installation of *Fluxattitudes* (1991) and Anne Wayson and Courtney Egan's *Bra Quilt* (1992). The Danielson/Agnew project was also a unique combination of the video program's focus on public dialogue through open access and the exhibition program's history of encouraging site-specific projects.



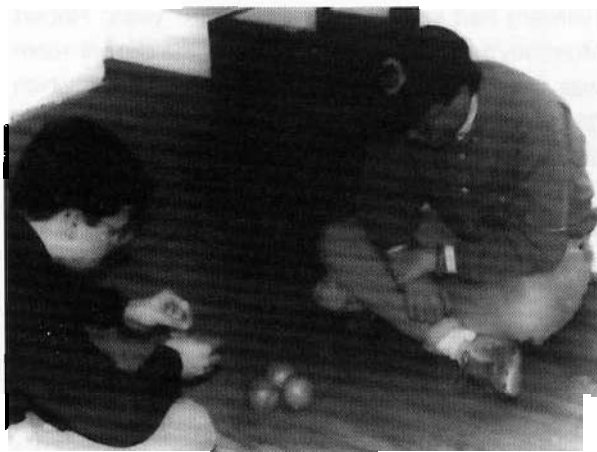
Rob Danielson & Terese Agnew, *Salvage Lounge*, 1988. Photo: Pau Dickinson

Surveying the Field: *A Question of Paint* 1990

Many longtime audience members and some Hallwalls staff were taken aback by curator Charles Wright's focus on new developments in abstract painting and his inclusion of artists from commercial galleries. Wright attempted to explore the irony of an investment in the history of abstraction as well as look seriously at the artists who were doing it. During his two-year tenure (1989-91), he thought of Hallwalls more as an institution than as an artist's space, and programmed shows which were more retrospective in attitude than those of his predecessors. In fact, his thinking was similar to Charles Clough's first painting shows, in which established artists were shown with later generations of emerging painters. Wright was vindicated to a certain degree when artists from his shows (Byron Kim, Mathew Barney, Rirkrit Tiravanija) turned up in Whitney Biennials and similar surveys of contemporary abstraction began to appear in the early '90s. The Whitney Biennial list has always been one way to test the soothsaying skills of Hallwalls curators, although the interval between recognition from alternative spaces and inclusion in major exhibitions is often too short to say for certain which discovery came first.

Retrospective Initiatives: *Fluxattitudes* 1991

At once an uncharacteristic backward glance and a revolutionary experiment in installation practice, *Fluxattitudes* was both a guest-curated exhibition and an artist's project. Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood pulled together a massive list of both seminal Fluxus artists and contemporary artists in the Fluxus (non)tradition. Rirkrit Tiravanija directed an installation in which opening night audience members put on white gloves and installed the show. It included works by George Maciunas, Ben Vautier, Ay-O, George Brecht, Alison Knowles, Yoko Ono, Daniel Spoerri, and many other of the original Fluxus artists as well as contemporary works by such artists as Christian Marclay, Cady Noland, Mike Kelley, and Martin Kippenberger. *Fluxattitudes* traveled to the New Museum, the first wave in a torrent of renewed interest in Fluxus which lasted throughout the early 90s.



Fluxus performance during opening/installation of *Fluxattitudes*, 1991. Photo Nancy Parisi

Charles Wright felt the show fit into his art-historian's view of Hallwalls: "I was interested in doing programming that was museum-quality (I'm not really sure what that means) but to do things that seemed to be relevant to the broader field, to sort of question means and modes of presentation. *Fluxattitudes* is probably the most explicit example of that."

Back to Basics: Robert Morrissey, *Sculpture* 1992

When Buffalo artist Sara Kellner took over the Exhibitions program in late 1991, the funding climate for Hallwalls had changed drastically for the worse. Offering thousands of dollars to artists like Barbara Bloom to do a commissioned installation was now out of the question as the New York State Council on the Arts budget was roughly halved and NEA funds were threatened by Congressional scare tactics. Kellner's solution to this crisis was actually consistent with two urgent needs: to do cheaper exhibitions and to serve the artist constituencies of the Western New York area. The 1992 *Sculpture* and Robert Morrissey installations included some artists from the region (as many early Hallwalls shows had done) but also returned to more formalist concerns. In a roomy installation which highlighted the clean lines and post-minimalist qualities of much of the work, *Sculpture* was the first group sculpture exhibition

Hallwalls had sponsored in almost 10 years. Robert Morrissey's concurrent installation in the project room was the first of many Project Room installations which gave area artists a generous space in which to do new site-specific works. Morrissey's suspended constructions involving hidden magnets were later featured in well-reviewed exhibitions at commercial galleries in New York and Buffalo.

Regional Imperatives: Heidi Kumao 1994

The term "area artist" is always problematic but especially so for artists like Heidi Kumao of Syracuse, whose work has traveled the country and resides unquestionably at the cutting edge of multimedia. In her zoetrope installation, Kumao effectively reinvigorated a defunct technology by turning it inside out, using simple but mysterious human interactions as her subject matter. Artists like Kumao from Syracuse, Andy Fabo from Toronto, and James Agard from Pennsylvania represent Sara Kellner's efforts to look outside of the New York scene, a mission she has taken very seriously. In a recent interview, Kellner said, "New

York is certainly not the center of the art world anymore, just a very concentrated part of it. I started getting hooked in to things going on in Toronto and Canada, which has been really important to me in the last few years. Not only is there all this incredible stuff going on but it's only an hour and a half away and it's just not being shown here, which shocked me. And if we're not supporting the Western New York artists, it makes no sense to open the doors."

As Kellner states, the move away from art world centers like New York is not just about money. Certainly funding for the arts is shrinking, but the art world is going through a parallel process of simultaneous constriction and expansion. As the commercial venues find it necessary to exercise caution, it makes less sense for artists to flock to these former meccas. Secondary or even tertiary cities like Buffalo can maintain their own circuits while connecting with other systems in former hinterlands like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Wyoming. New networks—aided perhaps by wider use of Internet technologies—can circulate information about artists and work. In the meantime, smaller-scaled models like the newly formed Artist Residency Exchange: Western New York can help allay the sting of "regional" labels. Hallwalls started out by positioning itself in relation to New York, largely because the founding artists wanted to live there. As it turned out, the art world is a much bigger place.

This essay is partially based on interviews conducted during 1994-1995 with the following people:

Charles Clough, Hallwalls co-founder

Charlotta Kotik, Albright-Knox Art Gallery curator, 1972 - 1983

Past and present Hallwalls staff:

G. Roger Denson, Staff programmer (1978-1980), Exhibitions curator (1980-1982)

Claudia Gould, Exhibitions curator, 1982-1983

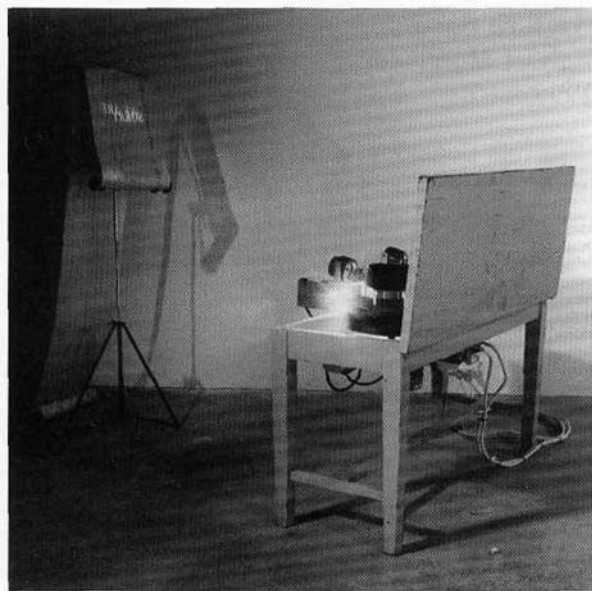
Robin Dodds, Exhibitions curator, 1983-1985

Catherine Howe, Exhibitions curator, 1985-1989

Charles A. Wright, Jr., Exhibitions curator, 1989-1991

Sara Kellner, Exhibitions curator, 1991-present

Portions of these interviews also appear elsewhere in this book.



Heidi Kumao: *Tied: A Duet*, 1993.

EXHIBITIONS

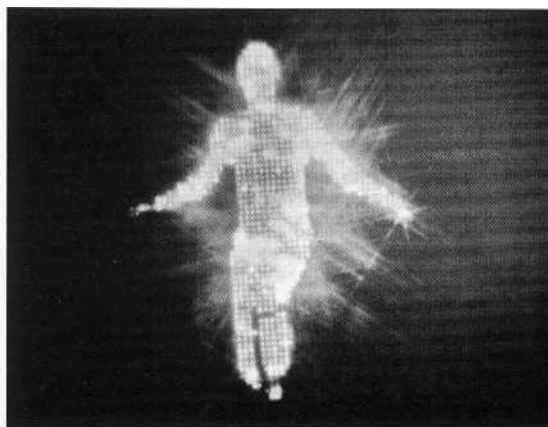
DAVID SALLE on JACK GOLDSTEIN

Excerpt from "Jack Goldstein: Distance Equals Control," in *Jack Goldstein*, 1978

More than most post-conceptual artists who come to mind, Jack Goldstein's work seems directly related to fears and anxieties about living in the world, and yet, significantly, the look of the work is almost antiseptically divorced from any cliché notion of the language of Angst. There are no smudge marks or erasures; there is no hesitancy of execution. On confronting the work for the first time, most viewers will be struck by how closely it mimics the slick presentation of commercial art. The images Goldstein uses are presented in a way which links them to media with a much greater sense of complicity than one finds in the work of the Pop artists. Unlike Pop painting, transformation of the meaning of the image is not linked to simple change of form. What the films and records taken from public media is not so much a catalog of ironic images, but the modes of presentation themselves. There is in Goldstein's work almost a sense of allegiance to the conventions of commercial presentation, which becomes ironic because of his intention to locate a source of control over his imagistic environment.

... A friend related a story of seeing how fruit cocktail was made. All the fruit was bleached and drained of its original taste and color and then the pieces of fruit fiber, all cut to uniform shape, were reconstituted with chemicals to look and taste like the fruits they had once been. This is analogous to the methodology of Hollywood, of the entertainment industry: to drain away any real significance and replace it with the representation of the thing which is significant. Goldstein's work is not entertainment; it is art, and as such is poignant because he chooses to work so closely to the edge of the process of reconstitution. The works take on poignant overtones not because he calls all this to mind, but because he contains it in himself as an artist, somewhat like the miner who almost looks forward to the first signs of black lung.

Reprinted from the catalogue which accompanied a solo exhibition of Goldstein's work, November 3-26, 1978.



Jack Goldstein, "The Jump," film still from *Hallwalls* catalogue, 1978

DORIT CYPIS

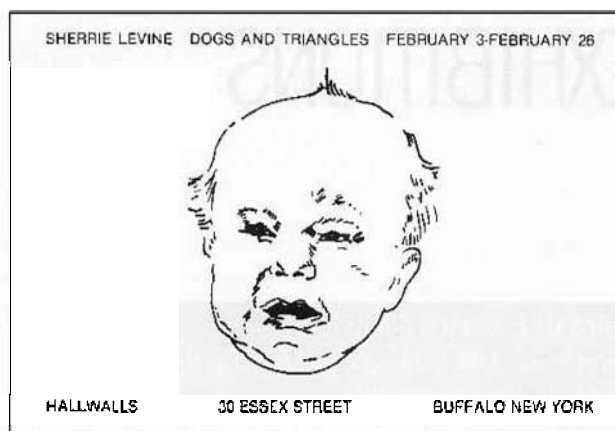
Artist's notes from *Ten Artists' Work Sent from Los Angeles to Hallwalls and Selected by Foundation for Art Resources, Inc.*, May, 1978

I am from the East yet live in the West.
I met him there.
The man goes back through Buffalo.

Art is my social extension. I must make contact.
I am here, yet you are there, I extend myself yet
can only anticipate your reaction
and interpretation of installation, unknowingly.
Enclosed you will find detailed instructions as to
installation. Please return to me the proof in the
form of photographs.
I remain, wondering

Dorit Cypis
3/31/78

Reprinted from an unbound set of 33 cards which functioned as the catalogue for Ten Artists' Work Sent from Los Angeles to Hallwalls and Selected by Foundation for Art Resources, Inc., May, 1978, guest-curated by Constance Lewallen and Morgan Thomas. The exhibition also included work by David Askevold, Michael Brewster, Robert Cumming, Jill Giegerich, Raul Guerrero, Steve Kahn, Judith Miller, Allen Ruppersberg, and Ilene Segalove, "made or selected specifically for traveling a distance, for installation by written instruction in an unknown gallery space, and for a group situation. [The participants] are singular artists, not representatives of any movements, Los Angeles sensibility, or generation." Cypis' contribution consisted of a torn photograph and notes, to be patched into the wall after the show closed.



Exhibition invitation, Sherrie Levine solo show, 1978.

G. ROGER DENSON (*Exhibitions Curator, 1980-1982*): When I first met Chrysanne and Leta Stathacos, both Chrysanne and I had a Summerspace show [August 1978] and mine was about Hector Berlioz's *Requiem*. It was called *Dies Irae*. I was into the late Romantics. Leslie Fiedler came into the show and started screaming, "Hector Berlioz' *Dies Irae*, how profound, how amazing!" and I thought he was Arthur Fiedler, the Pops conductor. So I was going around saying Fiedler saw my *Dies Irae* and he loved it. Then I found out who he was and read some of his stuff, and I was still impressed. Those kinds of intersections were always occurring.

Excerpted from a 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

CHARLOTTA KOTIK on **JENNIFER BARTLETT**
Excerpt from "Jennifer Bartlett: Grids and Canvas,"
in *Jennifer Bartlett: Selected Works, 1980*

In the course of her extremely prolific career, Bartlett liberated herself from the notion that there is only one solution to each problem, and the visual variety of her current work is the result of her indefatigable search for a range of solutions and expressions. She firmly believes that settling for only one solution inevitably brings stifling stagnation. Over the years her ability to present a range of plastic expression, even with a single work, has become unsurpassed.

... Bartlett's new spontaneity belies her strict adherence to the complex system of predetermined and totally formulated strategies and principles. Her free-wheeling, energetic style is, in fact, strictly controlled and can, therefore, successfully combine diametrically opposed

elements. By creating her personal code system, Bartlett conveys to the viewer her own perception of the real world and its events. She chooses familiar subjects, many of which were traditional subjects of art for centuries. She takes landscapes and the human figure, strips them of all their unnecessary elements and searches for their inner substance. She has chosen her elaborate and diversified style precisely for this purpose.

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying retrospectives of the artist's work at Hallwalls (November 22-December 31, 1980) and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (November 23, 1980-January 4, 1981), the first project in Four By Three, a series of exhibitions and residencies jointly sponsored by the two organizations and CEPA.

GARY NICKARD (*Director of CEPA, 1982-88*): *Four By Three* was a really unusual undertaking: one of the first times alternative spaces worked with a major museum. All three organizations—CEPA, Hallwalls, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery—applied for a tripartite NEA grant to present exhibitions at each location. The first I can remember was the John Baldessari show at CEPA and the Albright-Knox, and then another by William Wegman. Credit should really be given to Charlotta Kotik for that series—she was willing to work with us, when a lot of museum personnel at other places wouldn't have given the idea a second thought.

This and subsequent passage adapted from a phone interview with Ronald Ehmke, November 1995.

VALENTIN TATRANSKY

Excerpts from "Fischl, Lawson, Robinson & Sharpe"
in *Figuring*, 1981

Three of these four painters have only recently started to show in New York City. Eric Fischl had his first one-man show last spring at Edward Thorp's gallery; Thomas Lawson will have his first show in an independent gallery this coming spring at Metro Pictures; and Walter Robinson, as of this writing, is still not represented by a gallery ... Two or three years ago it was impossible to show these kinds of paintings in New York City at an established commercial gallery—not that this type of art wasn't around at the time. Richard Prince, another young artist who shows at Metro Pictures, said that it was hard to show this type of work as recently as a year ago. Now, this kind of image making has flooded the New York galleries.

... Certainly, the public emergence of these painters has nothing to do with a revolution in taste among New York art dealers. But it does have something to do with artists banding together, putting themselves forward and forming their own public forum. The two founders of Hallwalls, Robert Longo and Charles Clough (the curator of this show), are now exhibiting New York artists. Having a place outside of New York City helped a number of artists, not necessarily from Buffalo either, to surface in the big city. I remember David Salle (now with the Mary Boone Gallery) and Sherrie Levine (now with Metro Pictures) saying a couple of years ago that Hallwalls was the one place that supported and understood their work. A few weeks ago you could read about Cindy Sherman in the *Soho Weekly News* as having gotten her public start in Buffalo. Sherman, like Salle and Levine, is not from Buffalo—the point is that her Hallwalls beginning was cited by this New York newspaper as pedigree.

... This show that Clough has organized for Hallwalls does in fact illustrate a current trend among young painters in

New York. But to stop at that is to miss the essence of this exhibition. ... Included here are some of the more gifted and intelligent figurative painters in New York City. Sooner or later everyone jumps on the bandwagon. The current Whitney Biennial in New York attests to it. What's lacking at the Whitney Museum is not lacking in this particular show at Hallwalls: a sense of discrimination.

Clough's selection throws into relief the most important issue that's emerged in the current practice of figurative painting... The paintings here argue that the act of seeing belongs to culture. These artists don't paint from nature. They paint culture. In other words, they see in terms of images. They use found images—cultural artifacts—like newspaper photographs, magazine pictures, other art, and in general, what they remember of pictures in periodicals, books, television, and movies.

... (However,) unlike the Pop Artists and photo-realists, who painted in a manner that aped the look of the image that they were often simply mechanically trying to reproduce[,] Fischl, Lawson, Robinson and (David) Sharpe insist on the convention of painting, because they are moved by what the image is in itself, and what it signifies, rather than they are [by] the availability of the image... These four painters are closer to the American tradition of abstract and figurative painting than they are to Duchamp. ... The difference between someone like Robinson and Warhol is that Warhol is more impressed with the person—Elizabeth Taylor, let's say—or the brand name, than he is with the image itself.

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying Figuring: Eric Fischl, Thomas Lawson, David Sharpe, Walter Robinson, curated by Charles Clough, presented at Hallwalls March 6-31, 1981.

CHARLOTTA KOTIK on ROBERT LONGO

Excerpt from *Figures: Forms and Expressions*, 1981

Isolated in the white blankness of their uniform background, Longo's drawings of urban men display a formal beauty that disguises their unsettling content. The descriptions of men and women are ambiguous—we will never learn whether it is a dance of joy or the gestures of infantile grief; whether it is the spinning fall of the victim or of the assassin, which Longo has singled out to be locked into visual permanence. Action and speed, exemplified by perpetual movement, govern our time and we are conditioned to view events in their narrative progression. But each event evolves in a succession of simple gestures, movements, actions, and reactions, and it is when it is suddenly stopped—interrupted in its course—we are confronted by the alarming presence of the unexpected.

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying Figures: Forms and Expressions, a joint exhibition curated by Hallwalls, CEPA, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery staff, presented November 20, 1981-January 3, 1982 at all three venues. Other exhibited artists included Leon Golub, John Ahearn, Sandro Chia, Ellen Carey, and Robert Mapplethorpe.

RICHARD FLOOD

Excerpts from "Agitated Figures,"

in *Agitated Figures: The New Emotionalism, 1982*

It now appears that the recent figurative revival has neatly sidestepped the post-modern bias against representationalism by arriving in a guise which mutes its highly suspect origins. That guise has everything to do with a love for painting (which has nothing to do with strategy) and an emotive persuasiveness (which has nothing to do with concept). As contemporary figuration continues to proliferate, one senses that it is a tactic for marking time, an energetic retro-ramble into the not too distant past. Already, much of it seems like a frivolous afterword to a book completed a full 60 years ago. ... Much of it is compromised by puerile plagiarism. Some of it exhibits an adaptive intelligence that authoritatively advances its own case while—sincerely or ironically—acknowledging its roots. Virtually none of it suggests the kind of inevitability which heralds a departure; contemporary figuration is definitely a return. However, its idiosyncratic, introverted nature is quite appropriate for this

internationally combustible period when the personal voice is, time and again, lost in the rising din. For the artists in this exhibition, figuration is also a means for spiritual and emotional release.

... Their mostly neutered figures are more personifications of emotion than depictions of people. Their occasional elegiac excess acts as a kind of moral caution against the atrophy of feeling. This is not to imply that the work has a social function—far from it—but rather, like the Gothic convention of a tale within a tale, the work seems to enlighten by sharing the refined anxiety of its vision.

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying Agitated Figures: The New Emotionalism, guest-curated by Hal Bromm and featuring the work of Jedd Garet, Roseanne Generali, Keith Haring, Peter Julian, Cheryl Laemmle, Jody Pinto, Jane Rosen, Terry Rosenberg, Russ Warren, and Frank Young. The exhibition was presented at Hallwalls April 2-May 1, 1982 and then at the Hal Bromm Gallery in New York from May 22-June 19, 1982.

WALTER ROBINSON (*visual artist, critic, editor*): I remember the Collaborative Projects show that Hallwalls hosted in 1982—particularly the *Buffalo Artists Open* section of the exhibition, which I oversaw—as the ultimate in egalitarian art events.

Prior to the show, at Colab's direction, Hallwalls advertised the *Open* in local media, inviting Buffalo artists to submit work for the show for a \$2 entry fee. The fees were pooled, totalling I believe about \$200 or \$250. The evening of the opening, attending artists were polled by paper ballot on their favorite works in the show. At midnight, the kitty was divided up into a number of cash prizes (I don't remember how many) that were handed out to the winning artists. All the money was distributed according to the votes of the participants. A perfect art democracy.

It was also a great party. The Hallwalls staff did most of the work and did it well. There was a terrible snowstorm and artists complained to me later; they had been unable to get to the gallery to vote because of the weather and thought it was unfair. I came down with earaches in both ears and went to the local emergency room where an attractive woman doctor took my blood pressure—it was high, the first time I found out—and she scolded me for not taking better care of myself. I was in love—momentarily, as it turned out, because I never saw her again. I'll always remember my faux pas when I read the winners of the *Open* prizes over the PA system at Hallwalls; I said something about how "this sure wasn't the work I would have chosen!" This was true but I thought I had inadvertently insulted the artists who had won. As for the rest, I recollect little, even though it was the height of my career as Colab president, since I spent most of the time there, and much time in subsequent years, drunk and drinking, I'm sorry to say.

The Buffalo Artists Open and Up With People exhibitions, organized by Collaborative Projects, were presented at Hallwalls November 5 - November 30, 1982. The comments of Walter Robinson and Alan Moore were written for this volume.

ALAN MOORE (*artist, educator*): Our video installation "Studio Melee" was part of Colab's exhibition at Hallwalls in 1982. The success of the display—five themed sets within which we taped impromptu skits, leaving the gear around afterwards for visitors to do the same—inspired Terry Mohre and me on a long chimerical quest for a stand-alone interactive video machine. We forgot the thrill and wonder of the Melee at Hallwalls, a stylish, slapdash, free-for-all, "punkish" collaboration between all of us from NYC and artists in Buffalo to fashion a fun-time event. Tony Billoni and Tony Conrad's performance in our Newsroom set remains one of my favorite pieces of Melee video.

BRUCE ADAMS (*Buffalo-based painter and teacher*): Hearing that Hallwalls was going to hire a new curator from New York, I decided to make an appearance early, before she had already formed what I assumed would be a tight circle of friends. I walked in, introduced myself to Robin Dodds, and within minutes I was assisting her in hanging an exhibit (an act I'd repeat many times). It was also the start of a close friendship that has endured to this day. Robin welcomed many new people into Hallwalls, broadening and strengthening its artist base. She was eager to share her vast knowledge of art and its practitioners. She freely offered her views on the very complex art she exhibited, making it accessible as no magazine or book could do. She initiated the Artists Advisory Board, and included Buffalo artists in main exhibits with greater frequency, abolishing the abysmal Matrix Room (a shoebox-sized space in the corner where local artists had previously been relegated). And when I was ready to take a shot at exhibiting in New York, Robin gave advice on where to go, and where not to go, and what to do when I got there.

This and subsequent passage excerpted from a 1995 statement written for this publication.

ROBIN DODDS (*Exhibitions Curator, 1983-85*): I think it's good for the institution to have a very vital profile, which can come from a mix of artists who are young, who aren't in the public eye, with artists who have an enormous public reputation. I think that the mix helps both kinds of artists, the ones who are well known and the ones who aren't. I had worked at the New Museum before I came to Hallwalls, so I had gotten a lot of slides from artists all over the place. I knew artists I wanted to show from the years that I spent there, as well as the fact that I had already lived in New York for 10 years. I was already seeing all the galleries that I could. I wasn't making studio visits, but I was seeing just about everything that was in any kind of gallery. ... When I went to visit an artist, my favorite question was "Whose work do you like?" I often would ask for a referral to another artist. The disappointing thing was that I wouldn't get a lot of referrals. There weren't a lot of artists hiding out in the woodwork. It turned out that there weren't a lot of artists who weren't getting some kind of exposure. In the period when I was [in Buffalo,] the East Village was huge. I'd go there and I'd see artists I didn't know, having great solo shows in hot new galleries, so obviously I wasn't in the loop either. And if an artist was showing in an East Village gallery, I wouldn't consider them. They didn't need me, they didn't need Hallwalls.

... You want the show itself to have an impact, not just the pieces in the show. You want people to go from one piece to the other without losing some thread, some perception that they are experiencing. That's how my shows worked, rather than on a topic, even though they were grouped in a topical format. To this day, I don't read about art. I'll pick up an art magazine and I'll see a critic saying something about an artist's work and that's what I think of when I think about that painting, and I almost don't want to think the way another person thinks about the painting. So I'm handicapped in that way because I'm not a critic. ... I don't think it was because I couldn't put into words what I was doing; it was that for me the words weren't really important. Which is why I would never really consider ever being a critic, or for that matter at this point, a curator, because as a curator you do have to put these things into words. That in some ways defeats the purpose of having the exhibition. It offends me in a way to have to do it.

Excerpted from a 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

CLAUDIA GOULD, EDIT DE AK, & DUNCAN SMITH
Excerpts from *Motives*, 1984

Motives is the eighth in a continuing series of cooperative projects organized by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, CEPA and Hallwalls. Initiated in 1980 (under the title *Four By Three*), this ongoing project brings exciting contemporary work to the audience of the museum and the artists' spaces of Buffalo.

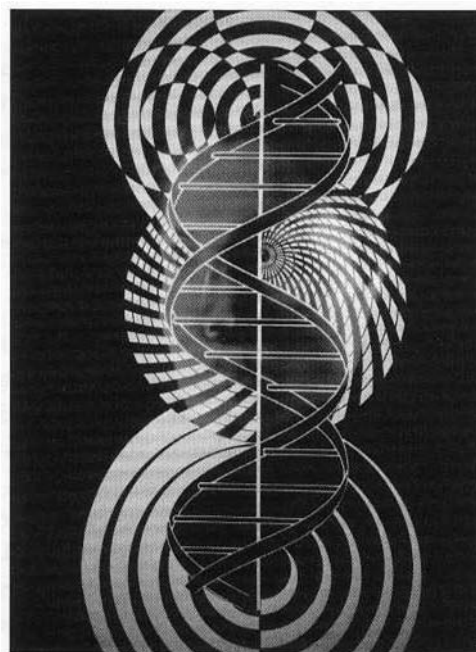
Motives is an exhibition about political and social non-violent activism and how this activism translates through contemporary art. The artists chosen are not political artists per se, but rather artists who are committed to expressing the polemics of contemporary society.

—Claudia Gould, curator

With their essentially lumpen source being mechanical reproduction, these artists infiltrate the pores of art and differ from the slogans of specialists whose very specialization automatically precludes them from infiltrating issues. They also differ from the raunchy political stance of irony, negative psychology, and esoteric cliquishness of the early Colab posturings. One cannot be snide with the vernacular public. ... [The artists here] don't create. For them it is not creative intention and authenticity like the primacy of the painterly act. ... They work within a function of art that is based on a practice other than existential ritual. They layer meanings with contiguous meanings and endlessly transgress, copy, trace.

—Edit deAk with Duncan Smith, catalogue essayists

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying Motives, consisting of installations by Joseph Nechvatal and Christy Rupp at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, February 28-April 1, 1984 and an exhibition of works by Doug Ashford, Jennifer Bolande, Eva Buchmiller/Squat Theater, Jane Dickson, Kathryn High, Nechvatal, and Rupp at Hallwalls and CEPA, March 2-29, 1984. The project was organized by Claudia Gould, who was Hallwalls' Exhibitions Curator from 1982-83, and is currently Executive Director of Artists Space in New York City.



Ellen Carey: *Untitled*, 1987 (Collection International Polaroid Corporation, Cambridge, Mass.), from *The Spiral of Artificiality* catalogue, 1987.

BRUCE ADAMS: One particularly vivid early memory involves an open forum that took place in what was the back room of Hallwalls when it was downtown. As I entered, the discussion seemed to be focused on Catherine Howe. I knew Cathy, having recently arranged her first post-graduate solo exhibition at peopleart bflo., where I had been curator. Here she was, besieged by numerous unfamiliar artists, apparently for daring to be a painter when, as everyone knew, painting was dead. Anxiety set in, not because I knew that I too in my darker moments had painted, but because if this ugly mob had suddenly turned its attention toward me, I wasn't prepared to respond. I was struck with the thought that if I couldn't justify what I was doing, then perhaps I had no business doing it. (Later I learned that the proper response was, "fuck off, media scum.") Catherine would go on to be visual arts curator, a personal friend, and a great painter.

DEBORAH BERSHAD on ANDRES SERRANO

Excerpt from *The Spiral of Artificiality* catalogue essay, 1987

Despite the abstract quality of Andres Serrano's imagery, his photographs also emerge from a Surrealist thematics. Although these large-scale works suggest color field paintings, his subjects have developed from a series of images that graphically dealt with religious themes, exploring the relationship between deviant sexuality and religion. Serrano's materials are highly symbolic—blood, milk, and urine. This use of actual body fluids in creating art can be understood as an ironic allusion to the by-now overworked analogy between the twentieth century artist and the child. The trope of "freshness of vision" this connection usually produces is here elided in favor of a more brutal reading—the infantile fascination with excrement continued into adulthood.

Nevertheless, disgust and shame are evoked and surpassed in Serrano's abstractions, which through their aesthetic appeal sublimate our own morbid fascination with the morbidity of the body. In this sense Serrano's photographs one-up painting. For while painting may provide us with images that suggest a primal experience of the body, Serrano's photographs document that experience.

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying The Spiral of Artificiality, guest-curated by Paul Laster and Renée Riccardo, also featuring work by Cindy Bernard, Dianne Biell, Ellen Brooks, Nancy Burson, Ellen Carey, Barbara Kasten, Pascal Kern, Vera Lehndorff & Holger Trützsch, Allan McCollum, Mark Morrisroe, George Rousse, Dick Schlefer, and David Seidner. The exhibition ran from November 7-December 10, 1987.

GARY NICKARD: There was a real healthy competition between the two organizations [CEPA and Hallwalls]. One year, for instance, we did a show guest-curated by Collins & Milazzo; Tony Conrad remarked that it looked like a Hallwalls show at CEPA. Around the same time, Hallwalls did a photography show [*The Spiral of Artificiality*], so it was kind of like a role reversal—Hallwalls had assumed the mantle of CEPA, and we had assumed the mantle of HW.

I can't think of any other example of two separate art organizations co-habiting. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. The positive is far more important than the negative, because the alliance allowed both organizations to try things they might not have done otherwise. Take the *Image Of War* collaborative exhibition [November 9-December 20, 1985], for example.

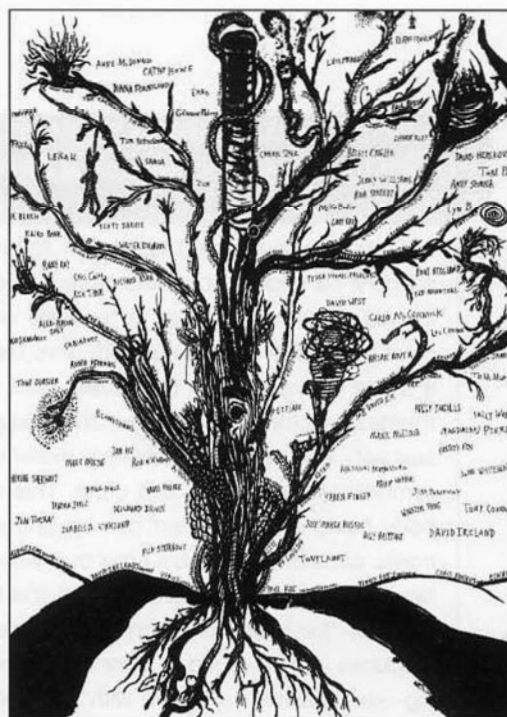
I don't remember the exact circumstances, but I had an opportunity to do a show with the estate of Larry Burrows, a Vietnam photo-journalist who had been killed in the invasion of Laos, during an attack on a helicopter he was in on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. His widow was trying to get shows for the work, which is extremely powerful. I had already seen an article on John Hull, who now teaches in the painting department at Yale—he'd done these paintings of French death squads in Algeria during their war of independence—and I had also received a solicitation from Visual Studies Workshop for Hiromi Tsuchida's collection of artifacts from Hiroshima with testimony about the fate of the artifacts' owners. So I was aware of all these things, and meanwhile Cathy [Howe] had seen slides from Cynthia Norton and another artist [Jack Anderson] incorporating images of weaponry. Cathy said, "You'd be interested in these things," and a lightbulb went off in our heads, and we got the idea to do a joint show. We almost had enough stuff to fill the two galleries, then I heard that the US Army had a collection of captured Nazi art, and then we added a selection of propaganda films. There was an example of a lost opportunity: that was a museum-quality show, and it should have been toured. I think the reason it wasn't was that we were all pretty young, and neither organization had the resources to pursue contacts or to deal with shipping. That was one that got away.

BARBARA BROUGHEL on BARBARA BLOOM
Excerpt from *Poetic Resemblance*, 1986

Convinced it will be demoralized by inaccuracies, and boiling over with imperialist intentions, or sexism, or some other unsavory premise, most of us gave up long ago on taking media "information" seriously. Indoctrination by insidious media ploys is something we've all learned to live with, but few of us have learned to play with. Barbara Bloom uses this reader apathy as the performative context for her work.

... There is something unsettling about being in the same room with a media presence which does not need us to complete itself—with a media presence which turns its gaze inward rather than outward in an act of assured self-containment. ... Crouched behind a veil of non-aggression, these pictures have manipulated us into making the first move.

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying *Poetic Resemblance*, guest-curated by Barbara Broughel and featuring the work of Advent, Gary Bachman, Alan Belcher, Ashley Bickerton, Barbara Bloom, Chris Burden, Stephen Frailey, Frank Gillette, Mike Kelley, McDermott & McGough, and James Welling, presented at Hallwalls February 8-March 22, 1986.



"Family tree" from *Nepotism* catalogue, 1989

ERIC M. JENSEN (visual artist): Catherine Howe gave me an informal education in modern art and theory through her curation (especially the *Nepotism* show—one of the best ever presented at Hallwalls) and [Artists Advisory Board member] Mark Joyce showed me the humor and absurdity of it all.

A few remembered moments:

- Working alone at 3:00 in the morning on my *Secret Museum* installation, I would wander through the even more chaotic Pat Oleszko set in the next room.

- Charles Long re-routing plumbing, electrical lines, and building walls to construct his installation—one of that year's best! Like Pat Oleszko, Long was a true professional both in his art and his craftsmanship.

- Fred Wilson's installation—a fellow traveler in the dusty rooms of museums.

Eric Jensen's *Secret Museum* installation was presented at Hallwalls in April 1989.

FRED WILSON

Excerpt from *Double Vision* catalogue essay, 1988

Double Vision is an exhibition of works by contemporary artists living in the New York City metropolitan area who, seeking to create a new aesthetic, draw from elements of non-western culture. These artists recreate language and symbolism using visual, verbal, and philosophical elements from lands where the majority of the world's people live, think, and create (Africa, Asia, and Latin America).

The painting, photography, and sculpture in this exhibition do not make overtly political statements or statements of current events. Rather, this is a subtle manifesto to retake the lost cultural growth which resulted from colonialism and western ethnocentric,

world-wide, mass media. Their art avoids the stereotypical cartoon and exotic imagery so readily available to be appropriated from the western view of "foreign" lands. The reason? It's not foreign. These artists are the descendants of peoples from non-western cultures. This makes their work ring true and reinforces their need to create, and create this kind of work.

Double Vision was guest-curated by Fred Wilson and featured John Allen, Richard R. Armijo, Emily Cheng, Albert Chong, Eugenio Espinosa, Tyrone Mitchell, Howardena Pindell, Helen Ramsaran, Carrie Yamaoka, and Charles Yuen. The exhibition was presented at Hallwalls February 13-March 25, 1988, and then traveled to the Longwood Arts Gallery, Bronx Council on the Arts, from April 16-May 27, 1988.

CATHERINE HOWE (*Exhibitions Curator, 1985-89*): The Visiting Curators program ... allowed me to sort of humbly approach somebody who had great ideas—and there are no opportunities for independent curators—and say, “Would you like a couple thousand dollars and a budget to do a show at Hallwalls?” I was learning, watching how other people did it and how their ideas developed. ... When I picked visiting curators I usually wanted them to be artists who had ideas that they wanted to work on with other artists. They didn’t just want to be artists in the studio doing their work.

... [One] really strange experience with visiting curators was Mike Osterhout’s *Nepotism* show [1989]. The catalogue is great. Mike Osterhout is one of these guys who is a true outsider. He’s really brilliant and he gets into trouble. He basically curated a show which was about what everybody curates a show for anyway; he just called it what it was. And he had a party. He invited all his friends to Buffalo for the party and his band played and the catalogue was like a fan book. Some of the artists were good and some of them weren’t, but that wasn’t the point of the show.

Excerpted from a November 18, 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

CARLO McCORMICK

Excerpt from “Nepotismia: The Family Curse,”
in *Nepotism*, 1989

Nepotism, by exposing a vulgar hidden agenda within the rarefied sphere of High Art, belongs to a derisively parodic series of curatorial efforts conceived by [Mike] Osterhout as conceptual art works in and of themselves. *Nepotism*, then, is like a companion piece to Osterhout’s two-year stint as East Village gallery owner/director Mo David, and to his other fictitious art world personas—Kristan Kohl, a deceased German woman abstract artist, and Richard Mauwra, a comically naive maker of assemblage art and prolific writer of sincere crackpot letters to various publications and art critics, and belongs within the context of his larger body of degenerate, blurry, and challenging encapsulations of life as art. ... *Nepotism* continues a line of shameless curatorial abuses Osterhout has produced as implicit parables, including his *Payola* show at Mo David Gallery, in which wall space was openly rented by the square foot to any eager artist willing to pay (and I was paid off to review it), and *Heteronymic*, a group show of four different artists at Hallwalls [1986], all of whom just happened to be the same person, a.k.a. Mike Osterhout.

... This essay, and perhaps even this show, might have a bit more credibility for those of us mesmerized by the seductive gaze of false objectivity, if only I could feign some impersonal distance in my analysis and judgment. This, though, would be impossible, and more significantly it would be a self-defeating lie. It’s precisely this culturally perpetrated deception that *Nepotism* both refuses to adopt and directly attempts to undermine by exposing it and holding it up to self-ridicule. The truth about this show is that we’re all bound together as buddies, colleagues, lovers, and ever-irritable siblings. Not a group of manifesto

propagandists, we’ve spent most of our time and energy, to the contrary, as far (as possible) from any such public platforms of careerist ambition.

... The only thing more asinine than all the misrepresentation and overexposure of the East Village Art Scene was how the group energy and feeling of limitless possibility still projected through its perverted media image to draw straggling lots of wild, mongrel psycho-visionaries to an overdeveloped tourist trap of mock-bohemia as if it were still a mecca of freedom, opportunity, and reward. ... What all these misguided later-comers arrived at was a situation as despicably crass as it was ultimately hopeless. New York in the Eighties is a place where artists come to pawn all comforts, and oft-times their souls, to vie for success in the market standard. What of course has happened is that a lot of those who once thought they wanted the big brass ring real bad have discovered how sickening, corrupt, and meaningless the competition, the prize, the competitors, the judges, and the spectators are. You might think otherwise, but in all honesty I believe that none of us wants anything to do with this game—except maybe to sabotage it. ... We all came here looking for something few of us ever found before discarding. Whatever it was that we were once looking for doesn’t so much matter anymore. What does, is what we all found here instead; each other.

Reprinted from the catalogue which accompanied the group show Nepotism, May 5-June 2, 1989. The 42 artists in the exhibition, all friends of guest curator Mike Osterhout, included Alex Grey, Keiko Bonk, Richard Kern, David West, Kembra Pfahler, Andy Soma, Tony Oursler, David Ireland, Karen Finley, Brigitte Engler, Les Levine, and David Herskovits.



MIKE GLIER (*visual artist*): I don't have any profound thoughts about Hallwalls, other than that I'm extremely grateful for having the chance to exhibit 10 years of my work there. It was helpful for me to see so much of my work together.

I think it's very important for the art world to be less centralized in New York City. Each city and area of the country needs its own artists and cultural life. To depend on a few big names to supply "international culture" is to feel alienated from modern art. Hallwalls supports regional artists and local culture by presenting local, national, and international culture in its many forms—creating a rich and nourishing stew. Eat hearty.

Mike Glier: 10 Years was presented at Hallwalls in 1988. His 1989 book Satisfaction was a joint publication of Hallwalls and the San Jose [CA] Museum of Art.

ARNOLD MESCHES (*visual artist*): My show at Hallwalls in 1985 helped introduce my work to the East Coast; I had sunned in LA for 41 years and had little or no northern exposure. The climate on this side of the continent can get very cold, particularly moving back at 61. But Catherine Howe brought me to Hallwalls and things warmed up; not only did I make dear friends in the hometown I left at 19, but my career blossomed, my work found its way into new collections, I got East Coast shows and felt encouraged to keep painting. What more can an artist want: time to work and dear friends to keep him warm?

Arnold Mesches' work was presented at Hallwalls September 20-November 3, 1985

ROBERT LONGO

Lotto as Metaphor, 1987

This show is a random sampling of works that have emerged out of the burden of careerism and commercialism in the art world. ... I believe that many of this group will survive, grow, and continue to contribute important works in the bigger picture.

Rather than lumping them all together or packaging them under one simple aesthetic, a creative diversion in the work represents a diversion in contemporary vision and life. If similarities exist between artists' works, it is not necessarily self-consciousness or trend but the demand of time.

The spirit behind this show is to give an opportunity to view works that are aggressive, thoughtful, and generally have no outlet.

Reprinted from Hallwalls' September 1987 calendar. Lotto as Metaphor, guest-curated by Robert Longo, included work by Lou Acierno, Kevin Carter, Jem Cohen, Amber Denker, Laura Emrick, Rick Franklin, Aki Fujiyoshi, Stacy Godlesky, David Goldsmith, Michael Horvath, Kirsten Mosher, Michael Minelli, Michael Morris, David Nyzio, Catherine Owens, James Schmidt, James Sheppard, Anne Supprenaute, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Seth Tobocman, and Cliff Wang. The exhibition ran from September 18-October 30, 1987 and was accompanied by a hand-made, limited-edition issue of Symbol Magazine, in which contributions by each artist were pasted over pages of an existing magazine.

NAYLAND BLAKE

Excerpts from

Bay Area Conceptualism: Two Generations, 1992

[T]he arguments [circa 1985] surrounding the nature of the art object as commodity and the problematic place of painting in particular, would not have been conceivable without the example of "idea art." By the early 1980s, however, the art object was wrapped in the glow of its new place as the investment of choice. As a result, there was a stampede to introduce the new painting as the international glamour product par excellence. In the San Francisco Bay Area this meant two things: an influx of work from New York and elsewhere, exacerbated by an intensive search for local versions of whichever painting style held sway at the moment.

During this time, however, conceptually oriented artists continued their practice within the network of alternative spaces and programs. Successive generations, newly arrived from art schools and other cities, continued to stimulate dialogue and contention by forming new organizations. While many of these venues were short-lived, by mid-decade the Bay Area boasted fifteen artist-run, non-profit arts organizations. Concurrently, a number of artists began to open commercial spaces that functioned to bring much of the new work to the attention of a wider and more receptive audience. As a result of these trends, recent years have seen an increased interest in the work of younger conceptualists as well as a rediscovery of many of their now-mature predecessors.

What does it mean to term "conceptual" artists with a decided investment in objects? It is here that the gen-

erational split alluded to in the title of this exhibition becomes most apparent. The original aim of conceptual art was the elimination of the object, an aim that was derived from a combination of the progressive politics of the 1960s and the concerted distrust of and disdain for formalist aesthetics. The art experience was conceived as reducible to a set of conditions that could be reproduced independently of their armature: the object. The exhibition of artworks meant either the presentation of diagrams from or residues of the meeting of those conditions. The medium of choice became words.

While formalist theory pushed the object into language, post-structuralist theory pulled language into objecthood. Laying bare the networks of discourse that informed such activities as government, architecture, design and forms of representation in general, it became possible to speak of the object in ways that acknowledged its socio-political history, and thus foster a critique of that history from various viewpoints (e.g. through feminist, gay, and trans-cultural experience). It is this new language-saturated object that is examined by the younger generation represented in this exhibition, an endeavor they share with many in America and Europe.

Reprinted from the 1992 catalogue published in conjunction with the exhibition Bay Area Conceptualism: Two Generations, guest-curated by Nayland Blake and featuring the work of Lutz Bacher, David Cannon Dashiell, Terry Fox, Dawn Fryling, David Ireland, Paul Kos, Tom Marioni, and Jon Winet & Margret Crane, presented at Hallwalls September 15 - November 10, 1989.

DANIEL LEVINE (*visual artist*): What I liked about a lot of the Hallwalls shows was that they allowed you as an artist or curator to formulate your own kind of vision. In New York, when artists curate it's usually about making a context for themselves. I curated *Amerikarma* in 1989. That was a show I was really happy about; half the people went on to be in the Biennial. I remember Cady Noland and Al Ruppertsberg saying it was a show they were proud to be in. *Amerikarma* fit into two shopping bags: the best kind of show! It was about doing narrative drawings, which I was interested in—basically it was about me. I wasn't interested in pop culture. Maybe it referenced that whole *Pictures* type of thing, which was the work which most intrigued me then. I came up with things like dividing figurative drawings into rural and urban.

It's funny to think of abstract painting being elitist and inclusive. When Charles [Wright] did *A Question of Paint*, that stuff was becoming important again. ... Charles saw it in a way that was theoretical, the way he saw the world. His agenda was theoretical; it's weird to think that that could be controversial.

Daniel Levine participated as a volunteer/artist/guest curator for a wide range of Hallwalls exhibitions beginning in 1982. In addition to Noland and Ruppertsberg, Amerikarma [November 18-December 22, 1989] contained works by John Currin, Jessica Diamond, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, John Miller, Steven Parrino, Raymond Pettibon, Donald Powley, Richard Prince, and Jim Shaw. Levine's remarks here are culled from a February 6, 1995 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

CHARLES A. WRIGHT, JR. (*Exhibitions Curator, 1989-91*): Coming to Hallwalls changed my whole life, because I would go to the City and all of a sudden I was a kind of doorkeeper and I had people knocking on the door. Thinking back on it, it was a very bizarre relationship. ... I wasn't so much interested in showing younger artists as creating intergenerational dialogues, all of that.

...I did *Question of Paint* ... to try to deal with the fact that I was running into painters [when] for all intents and purposes painting was supposedly dead. I think that the show was perceived as an incredibly conservative maneuver. I don't think anyone saw what I was trying to do. At least superficially it was a gorgeous show and carried with it all the negative connotations that go with that. But it wasn't supposed to just be about abstraction or just objects.

The other thing about that show and that first year is that Buffalo is a very isolating and isolated community.... The question for me was, who is the audience here? [Taking] my experience as an audience member 500 miles away and juxtaposing that onto a community was very difficult. *A Question of Paint* came out of a kind of sensibility I saw in New York. The other thing, and I'm not sure if this is totally true, is that *Question of Paint* came at a point where there really hadn't been an abstraction show since Robin [Dodds]. That was the last point where there was any directed investigation of abstraction in the galleries. *Question of Paint* is also a reexamination of postmodernism. ... It was a call to reexamine how painting can be understood historically. So it was a real test for me.

I was more interested, strangely, because it was the first show I had ever done, in what the artists thought about it. And I think that the validation for the project came not from specific audiences, but from the artists themselves. What's interesting about Hallwalls and working there was that you never got a sense of what you were doing, the value of what you were doing. I never did. Every two years, the program director could walk through the Biennial or pick up a catalogue and then someone would finally realize what had happened. That's what I feel about the time that I was there; that it was relevant for the artists and for me and there's a validation that came from outside that allows that to be.

... Let's take Byron Kim as an example; here was a young artist who hadn't shown anything in a commercial setting—I saw his work in the context of a NYSCA panel. [*A Question of Paint*] was the first time that he'd been approached. He's now represented by a reputable gallery; he's now having museum shows; he was in the 1993 Whitney Biennial. The satisfaction, the payback—because there was no immediate response to anything that happened in the gallery—was to say, "Gee, they're doing this, so I'm not the only person. My eye works." The validation is that you see artists working, continuing to produce, continuing to have an effect in the field.

Excerpted from a 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

CHRYSANNE STATHACOS (*New York-based artist; co-curator of The Abortion Project, 1992*): For an artist from a Greek American Canadian background who grew up in Buffalo and started my art career in Toronto, Hallwalls gave me a chance to cross boundaries. During the projects there with which I was involved, I met some of my best friends: General Idea, G. Roger Denson, Kathe Burkhart, and Tom Dean. As a young artist, I always wanted to see more interaction between Toronto and Buffalo. It has made me very happy to see this now happen with Sara Kellner; she has managed to cross the Peace Bridge with great success.

SARA KELLNER (*Exhibitions Curator, 1991-present*): Starting in '93 I really started doing things I felt strongly about. Tom Huff and James Allen were really the first two solo projects I did where I felt, Yeah, this is great stuff. ... And they were people from the area. ... I like getting into stuff like NAAO [National Association of Artists' Organizations] and doing the Artists in Residence program. I can't separate looking at the work and putting it in a gallery, I just can't do it. I also think that organizations like Hallwalls in places like Buffalo really do have an obligation to try to help their artists' communities, developing programs that give people money and professional experience. It's almost as important as getting the work out there.

Excerpted from a 1995 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

SUSAN HAPGOOD AND CORNELIA LAUF

Excerpts from "A Conversation With George Maciunas (and a Definition of FluxAttitudes)," in *FluxAttitudes*, edited by Hapgood and Lauf, 1991

SUSAN: So, George, wherever you are, we shuffled off to Buffalo and—

CORNELIA: —organized an exhibition that involved giving up everything the curator is expected to do except for the paperwork and obtaining the loans.

S: It was an attempt to deny our own power, while exposing the way it was manifested—exposing our practice, which usually exempts itself from inquiry. By inviting Rirkrit Tiravanija to install the show we bypassed the usual hierarchy and transferred our prerogative into the hands of someone else—and he, in turn, gave that right over to the audience during the opening: the audience installed the show... When they walked in, Rirkrit offered each of them a slip of paper. In many cases, these slips told them to pick up white gloves, which meant they were to begin installing.

C: The basket Rirkrit was "performing" with contained three types of scores: Fluxus scores from the early 1960s, game suggestions from popular literature such as *Phunology* or *Modern Party Games*, and slips with instructions written by Rirkrit, some of which said "pick up white gloves—1991." ... It seemed like the opening took forever. Eight hours of installing, with about fifty installers and ten supervisors.

S: During which Rirkrit managed to do close to no physical labor. He had basically conceived of procedures that threw curatorial practice into relief. Our traditional role of protecting the works of art was foregrounded when strangers began to handle them—it conflicted with our training as curators. Imagine our discomfort.

C: ... Cady Noland's work, on the other hand, was

immediately locked under a plexiglass vitrine, being one of the most valuable pieces in the show. We gingerly uncased the wire basket, Budweiser cans, and rubber chicken, placing them carefully next to a futuroscope from the early 1960s. Like it or not, Hallwalls could not afford to let that rubber chicken run free-range. Too risky.

S: ...It's odd, but I felt robbed of the curatorial experience one has dealing with the works when no one is around, before the show opens. It's one of the privileges of our type of work.

C: There you have one of the operative words of the experience. Privilege. Who may touch? Who may install? Who may identify?

S: You're a regular curatorial Kruger. We should also thank Christian Marclay for sending a new version of *Tape Fall*, nicely packed in clear plastic garbage bags. We could hardly distinguish them from the refuse we gathered during the opening, since the packing supplies remained as part of the show. ... Of course, our idealistic intention to show the mechanics of the exhibition couldn't be taken all the way—we couldn't reveal values, those additional bearers of meaning. For practical and social reasons, we couldn't really demystify the lending process too much. Although you, George, did not want these things to be of great monetary value, from a vantage point of thirty years later, we're a bit cynical about those inspiring but rather idealistic principles.

Reprinted from FluxAttitudes (Gent: Imschoot, uitgevers and Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, 1991). The accompanying exhibition, guest-curated by Cornelia Lauf & Susan Hapgood, was at Hallwalls from February 23 - March 27, 1991 and then traveled to the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York from May 10 - August 16, 1992.

JAMES ALLEN (*visual artist, educator*): Hallwalls, to me, is a place for questions, not reassurances. Most people prefer answers, but when you walk through the Hallwalls door, you must be prepared for questions. You may question what the art is about, or if it IS art, or if it is art of a high order, or question what art of "a high order" is. You may ask what this work says about the art-maker, about the society, about the YOU that is reacting to what you are seeing. Along with our various institutions that preserve and celebrate proven cultural solutions, it is good to have a place for questions. That's why we have universities and libraries and a few other places that are somewhat stuffy. Hallwalls does it with panache.

Now I don't know how much panache I have, but I was interested in showing work that would be sad, disturbing, terrible and beautiful, and that might, in its way, provide some reflection on hunger and poverty. That kind of work is made possible by places like Hallwalls.

James Allen's installation, I am poor, I am hungry was presented at Hallwalls in 1993.

CRAIG CENTRIÉ

Excerpt from "Beyond Silenced Voices" in *MollyOlga: 35 Years, 1995*

In many ways, the Fruit Belt appears to be a poor but charming and laid-back community on Buffalo's East Side. Like so many things in Buffalo, it masks many of the uglier sides of economic disparity and social marginalization. Even so, MollyOlga's building immediately feels like a sane and welcoming place to be, shaded under many old maples and sturdy in its turn-of-the-century red brick building. In the summer, the nearby fields that once held workmen's cottages become overgrown with red clover; an occasional child meanders down a well-worn path on the way back from some corner store. Somewhere in this place called the Fruit Belt, where German peasants once tried to recreate their homeland, planting fruit trees and cabbage patches, a mother cries for her crack-addicted son.

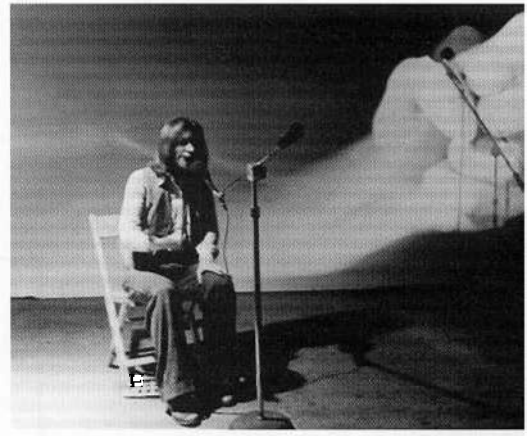
MollyOlga, by contrast, is a remarkable "free space." A place where people of all backgrounds, rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight, conservative or radical,

can come and feel like they are home. It is a drug-free, violence-free space that is nonjudgmental, where gang members recognize the importance of its place in the community and allow anyone to come and go without fear. Here, people with little or no formal education can interact with highly educated individuals on an equal basis. The financially struggling walk away with renewed hopes and dreams, while listening to the stories of more privileged participants. The privileged leave with a more developed and personal understanding of the problems of those who continue to struggle. Intellectual conversations flow freely while everyone sculpts, paints, and draws. Most importantly, it's a place where everyone has a voice. And isn't this what good education is about?

Reprinted from the catalogue accompanying a 35th anniversary retrospective of work produced at MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes under the direction of Molly Bethel and Olga Aleksiewicz Lownie. The exhibition ran from June 24-August 12, 1995 at Hallwalls.

For more about Hallwalls' Exhibitions program, see "Blame it on the Spaghetti: Reflections on the First Five Years" and Elizabeth Licata's essay "12 Exhibitions" elsewhere in this volume.

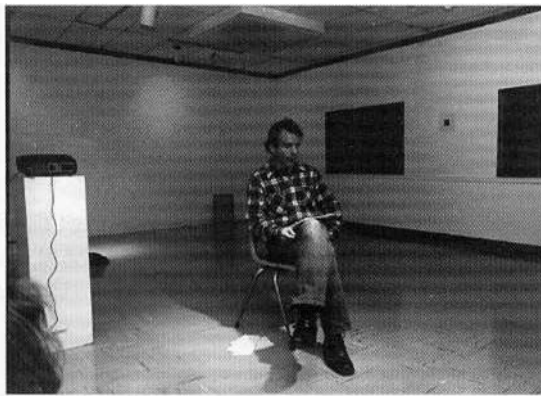
PERFORMANCE



Laurie Anderson, *Suspended Sentences*, Nov. 12, 1978.

LAURIE ANDERSON: For about 3 or 4 years—between 1975 & 1978—I was doing lots of small tours. I went up to Buffalo and did a piece called *Like a Stream*, and I did some things at DC Space that were just for that evening. I thought, “I can never repeat any of these things.” That was my policy; I did a lot of stuff like that. Then I realized I needed [some of these stories for other pieces], and I started doing more of that. I still do.

Laurie Anderson performed early works at Hallwalls (1978) and Artpark. She returned to Buffalo to perform The Nerve Bible at UB's Center for the Arts during Hallwalls' 20th anniversary season. The remarks above are excerpted from an interview with John Howell in Laurie Anderson (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992).



Spalding Gray discussing and performing excerpts from *Rumstick Road*, Nov. 14, 1978.



Eric Bogosian, *Slavery*, Apr. 24, 1979.

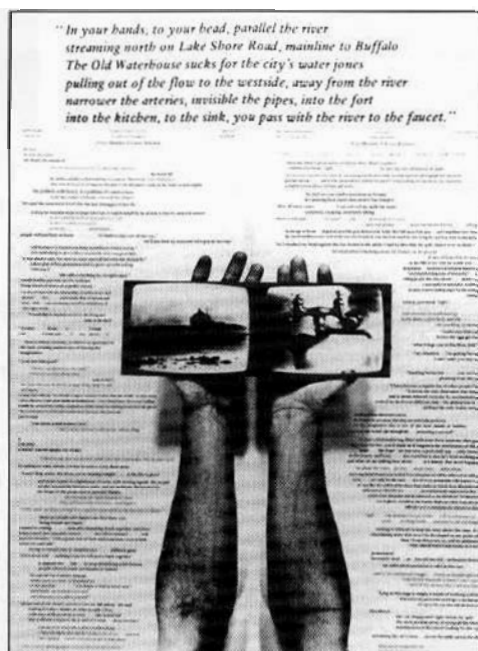
ERIC BOGOSIAN: Around [1977] I met some visual artists, notably Michael Zwack, Cindy Sherman and Robert Longo, all of whom were working with pictures in a new way that I found exciting and cool. And they thought I was funny! They loved my stuff.

And what was their stuff like? Ironic in the extreme and dependent on letting the pictures—which had a superficial quality that gave them instant impact—tell the story. These artists shared the belief that in our age of mass media we are saturated by imagery, and this familiar imagery, if framed, set off, edited or piled up, can reveal deeper currents flowing within us. In other words, they were slam dancing with pictures.

At the same time, the work was technically well-made, almost obsessive. And (oh, no!) it was entertaining. Anything but minimal. It was not expressive; there wasn't anything as broad as “consciousness” or as topical as “politics.” It was about the way we of the mass-media generation react and act on what we see.

Jack Goldstein did a performance that was just two guys fencing while music played in the background. Longo made reliefs of men fighting. Cindy loved making photos of stereotyped women. Zwack had a thing for heroic figures. David Salle called his show at The Kitchen *Bearding the Lion in His Den* and that's what it was all about. You wanna look at pictures of violence? sex? pretty girls? romantic landscapes? Fine, we'll give 'em to you. And then we'll twist the whole thing so that you're stuck with WHY you wanna look at 'em.

Eric Bogosian performed at Hallwalls in 1979 and 1981. His remarks above are excerpted from the introduction to the published script of Drinking in America (New York: Random House, 1987).



Robert Longo, poster/program notes for *Artful Dodger*, Jan. 7, 1976.

ANTHONY BANNON, "The 'Artful Dodger': Fascinating Visual Art," *The Buffalo Evening News*, January 8, 1976: We'd just been politely ushered into a small room in Hallwalls Gallery where the seats were arranged in an ellipse, the far side of which looked smack into the wall. The audience sat down, three-quarters of them contemplating walls. After a bit, the man who welcomed us shut the doorway with a piece of transparent plastic.

The event was called "Artful Dodger," by Robert Longo, a director of the gallery.

... Next, they turned the lights out and there was a lot of pounding on the other side of the walls. After that, a recorded sound track made declarations. ... Meanwhile, on the other side of the plastic, men barely illuminated carried objects, including a British-style witness box, a table, a large step ladder, and a chair covered with a sheet. Once the objects were in place, lights came up.

... "In this system, there is no reason," said the track, and a man climbed up the step ladder, removed a piece of the ceiling and disappeared upstairs.

"Here is a man possessed, working himself into a corner. He phased himself out of existence," said the track. "This is about making places out of other people's stories."

... "I am avoiding the issues, creating a void." The Artful Dodger.

The complexity of the dodge—a distant relative of theater—was interesting here, especially in the Hallwalls setting, usually a site for minimal, single-stranded conceptual work or for the frenzy of latter-day dadas. It showed the influence of Vito Acconci, with whom Longo worked during Acconci's residency at Hallwalls last year. But it also extended into the theatrical terms of Samuel Beckett.

... Beginning the evening with the politeness appropriate to the theater, the audience ended by conducting their own affairs. They separated from the action of the performance, just as if at home watching a television.

Longo made that evident by finally cutting the audience out of its space and permitting entry into his area, where a tiny television set was turned on. What the TV showed, however, was also a dodge, consisting of a close-up of a hand trying to balance a glass into a tiny crack in a table. The hand never succeeded.

Robert Longo's Artful Dodger performance and installation premiered at Hallwalls in January 1976 and traveled to Vehicule Art in Montréal in April 1976.

SCOTT RUCKER (*Performance Curator, circa 1978-1980*): I took over Music and Performance [essentially a single program] after Tony Conrad left. At that point, we basically brought in the people we wanted to see. One of the first people I booked was John Lurie. I remember Lydia Lunch coming, around the time she put out *Queen of Siam* (1980). The place was packed! Absolutely packed.

It was a great situation: "Oh, look, we've got some money—who do we want to bring in?" Thanks to Tony, we had good grants from the NEA and NYSCA, and then there was CETA money; without them we couldn't have done any of this. Tony was also able to tie us in with whatever was going on at UB.

It was a pretty small scene back then. We'd go to New York and see bands at CBGB, and then go to Toronto. We saw *everybody*. We didn't have any baggage; we just wanted to hear what was out there. Buffalo was kind of a cultural wasteland. But bands would come into Buff State; we didn't miss much. The Ramones, the Dictators, Gang of Four—all playing these impossibly tiny places. There were a lot of interesting performance acts that had music in them, too.

We were young; we didn't have a lot of limitations. It was more important to get this stuff out than to keep it sealed up anywhere. We didn't pay very much to anybody. I don't remember "negotiating fees" with *anybody*. Things are more categorized now; there are venues you wanna play now. We didn't have the idea that this was a "career move." Word of mouth was good enough to bring performers in. I can't remember any kind of qualitative analysis, either before or after the fact, anybody asking, "Why are you bringing this particular person?" Everyone wanted to do their best, present themselves as well as they could. I never felt that anybody did badly at Hallwalls.

You didn't need any legitimizing agents. Everything was possible. We felt like we were all in the same boat: the artists, and the people who worked at Hallwalls. No one said, "Well, this isn't good." It was much more cooperative: "Well, what can we *do* with this?" It was *all* new, it was *all* interesting. We were hungry! We were in Buffalo!

Excerpted from a phone interview with Ronald Ehmke, 1995.

DAVID KULIK (*Performance Curator, circa 1980-82*): I tended to book stuff I wanted to see myself. I wasn't consciously trying to explore any themes, but in retrospect I think some themes probably fall out based on my own tastes. For one thing, I like performance art to be entertaining. This may seem like a pretty "non-artistic" concern, but I feel like if you want upwards of 40 people to sit and watch you for an hour or so, you should be doing something that will at least hold their interest—that's entertainment. As a result of that bias, I think the performances we booked during my tenure tended to cut across themes of comedy (Mike Kelley, Robert Stewart, Disband, various local artists), drama (Tim Miller/John Bernd, Winston Tong/Bruce Gerdulig), and "special effects and generally cool stuff" (Theodora Skipitares, Tong/Gerdulig, Kelley, Jeff Way).

Likewise, I believe there is a similar continuum between performance art and each of the other types of performance, e.g. theater, dance, and music. Speaking for myself, it has always been pretty easy to make the distinction, to say this is performance art and that's just dance, or that's just theater, or whatever. It may sound presumptuous, and it may sound like value judgments, but that's the curatorial burden; that's how I made my decisions.

Artists were forming bands. Musicians were making art. Audiences were mixtures of both. The whole scene was cross-pollinated in the extreme, and it was great. I actually got my introduction to the punk/new wave music scene via the people at Hallwalls and CEPA. It was through them that I first became aware of the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, Talking Heads, and others. Actually, my "epiphany" was hearing the Minneapolis band Suicide Commandos on Biff Henrich's car tape deck in the parking lot at Essex Street. That was the music that inspired us (or at least me) to start the band that eventually became the Vores.

Some common themes characterized what was happening in both the music and art worlds at that time: Do It Yourself—start your own band, start your own gallery, everything's possible. Live on the edge. Take risks. Push the envelope. Turn it up, crank it out, work harder, do what hasn't been done before. Put more energy into it, put more blood into it. Throw out the old guard. Make some noise.

David Kulik's comments above, and his notes below, are culled from e-mail exchanges with Ronald Ehmke, February 1995.

PERFORMANCE, 1980-81

Reflections on the season by David Kulik (1995)

I hope you have a fact-checker on staff to correct any glaring errors. If not, and you use any of my descriptions of the performances, please include an apology in advance from me for any lapses of memory and pure fabrications; I'm sure there are a few.

The first performance I brought in was Disband. They were kind of a deconstructionist musical performance group made up of Martha Wilson (director of Franklin Furnace in NYC), Ingrid Sischy (who I believe had just been made editor-in-chief of *ArtForum*), Donna Henes, and Ilona Granet. They did song/skits that may have taken some inspiration from the stuff Devo was doing on video. (As a matter of fact, I still owe Martha a copy of the videotape from that performance. After 15 years I am still wracked with guilt about that.)

Jeff Way was, I think, a painter from NYC who also did performances. In this one he came out decked in many layers of different costumes and masks; while silently mov-

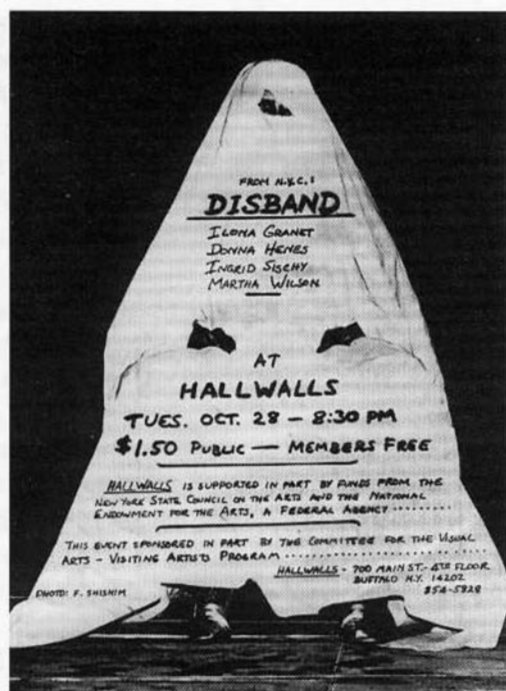
ing/shuffling/dancing he would peel off one layer of costume at a time to pretty dramatic effect. The feeling was akin to watching a shaman perform a tribal ritual. This was one of my favorite performances of the season.

Winston Tong and Bruce Geduldig did a performance incorporating Winston's achingly beautiful solo piece that used dolls to tell the story of a young Chinese girl. The dolls were manipulated by hand on a small tabletop with Tong playing the role of puppetmaster, though he also conveyed the emotions of his doll-characters through his own movement and expressions. In addition to the doll piece, Tong and Geduldig did some more free-form, less intimate stuff that involved a moving film projector; this was something they were also doing at the time with Tong's band Tuxedomoon.

Mike Kelley employed a stage full of homemade props, including a large teepee and a dunce cap (same form, different sizes), to put on one of the more manic and playful performances of the season. I remember that I liked it immensely, but I'm afraid I can't describe it beyond what I've already said.

Tim Miller and John Bernd brought their show *Live Boys* to Hallwalls from NYC, where it had played to great critical acclaim. The performance combined contemporary dance and movement with short vignettes of dialogue to explore the emotional highs and lows of the gay experience. It was a tender, touching piece that moved beyond the boundaries of the stage and left the impression that Miller and Bernd were lovers in real life, and were relating their own intensely personal experiences.

Towards the latter part of the season I began organizing more frequent "Local Performance" nights, where I would invite 4 or 5 local artists and/or musicians to perform short pieces. I especially enjoyed the performances put on by the "Kenmore band" people, e.g. George Scherer, Brian Szpakowski, Tony Billoni, and Mark Freehand. These people had been incorporating aspects of what I would call performance art into their musical projects (George, Paper Faces, Electroman, etc.), and I wanted to give them the opportunity to present their off-the-wall talents in a different kind of atmosphere. These performance nights were kind of loose, informal, risky, and lots of fun.

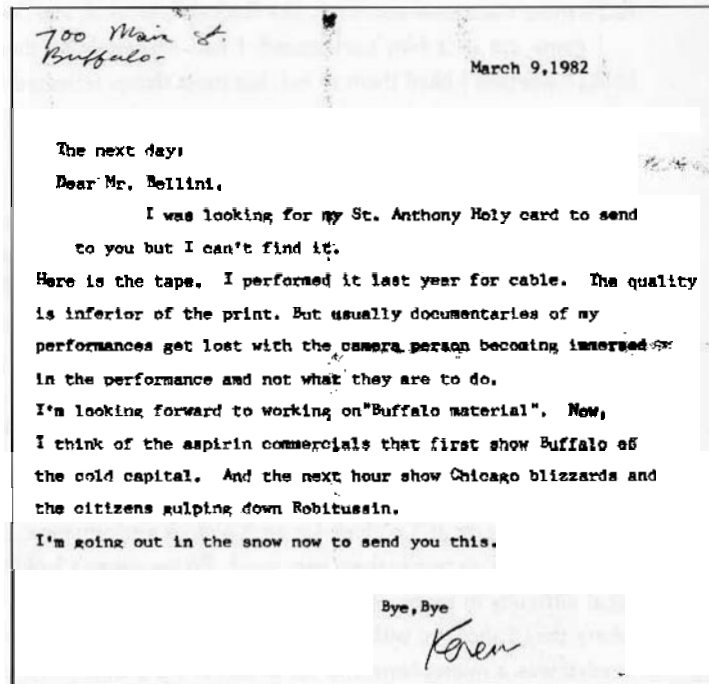


Poster for Disband performance, Oct. 28, 1980.

RONALD EHMKE, "Hurricane Karen: On the Loose and Heading for Buffalo," *Artvoice*, September 14, 1992: "Hallwalls was the first place to put on my work," Karen Finley says. Although by 1982 she had already performed in Chicago, California, and on a tour of Europe (one segment of which was filmed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder), it was then-curator Tony Billoni who "took the time to review my proposal," Finley remembers, and offered the emerging artist a booking.

The script Karen sent to Billoni was called *Cervix Banger*; in a cover letter, she listed representative situations she covered in her work, including "incest, elephantitis testicles ..., reading a suicide note of my father's while eating sauerkraut and brockwurst out of my bra, fist fucking and contraceptive love song dilemmas—I write my performance up to the last minute. I include relevant material to the audience, the gallery, and my own personal trial at the moment. For example: that the only reason someone might attend the performance is to see another audience member they have the 'hots' for and hopes to get lucky after the performance." Tony looked over the enclosed text and thought, "This is no script! Maybe it was, but I got the impression she listened to a tape of one of her pieces and then wrote it down. I thought, here's this stream-of-consciousness poet..." He recalls being struck by the opening line—"No, Herr Schmidt, I will not shit in your mouth, even if I do get to know you"—and felt he had to give her a chance.

Karen Finley's first performance at Hallwalls, sharing a bill with Harry Kipper of the Kipper Kids, was in 1982. She returned in 1987 and again in 1992 for a benefit for Hallwalls at Rockwell Hall. She has also presented paintings and sculpture in group shows, and an installation in the gallery. She will return in 1996 for an extended run of a new performance.



TONY BILLONI (*Performance Curator, 1982-83*): A stage manager came up to me before Karen Finley's [1992] show at Rockwell Hall [a 900-seat university theater] and said, "She's using milk crates to prop up those lights!" and smirked about all this other stuff she was doing. But then when you saw the show you realized what an incredible command she had over what she was doing. And I just said, "Look, man, she's the director. You just sit back and ask how she wants it done, and that's about all you need to do for this show."

It [reminded me of] a fellow who was doing theater here in Buffalo [in the 1970s] and just thought performance was the wasteland for people who couldn't make it in theater—when I believed that performance art was the last breath of experimental theater. I mean, experimental theater had become a joke! The real [theater] people I knew here in Buffalo, I thought they were really pompous and closed-off. But as soon as I met the people at Hallwalls, I felt liberated and open, and that I could do anything. And I did. As soon as I came to Hallwalls, I made three pieces in a year. They're not classics in any sense of the word, but the fact that I made them: that's what's most important to me. That's the spirit of Artists & Models, too: that anybody who wants to make something should go ahead and do it.

... The thing that performance art started in me was that it scared away the proscenium in many ways (although that's come back for most performers), so I was looking for a complete-360, nonstop event. ... It's not a two-dimensional plane we live on. If you gather 10 people together, the range of influences is multiplied rather than added. One of my guiding principles, I guess, is random information. ... I once told George Howell that I think of performance as a kind of summary of what I've been thinking about, what I've been involved in, an attempt to meld these influences together.

Tony Billoni's comments here are culled from a December 8, 1994 interview with Ronald Ehmke. See the chapter "City of No Illusions" for more information on the annual Artists & Models Affair, which Billoni and several collaborators initiated in 1984.

STEPHEN GALLAGHER (*Performance Curator, 1983-86*): The East Village was really the scene that was most happening, most vibrant, in New York before I moved to Buffalo (in 1982). So Tony had definitely picked up on what was happening and was bringing the best performers to Buffalo: Ann Magnuson, Gerard Little, Boris Policeband, and others. When I became performance curator, I continued to do that. But also during my "reign," my "tenure," PS 122 became much more active, so I began to present a lot more of the dancer/performers out of there, like Tim Miller, Jeff McMahon, Charles Dennis, Stephanie Skura, Yoshiko Chuma. It became a blend of those two things, but I also tried to bring in people from the West Coast who had a more traditional approach, like Rachel Rosenthal, and Bob & Bob.

I came out of a film background; I had absolutely no theatrical background whatsoever. There were a lot of people I booked whether I liked them or not, but most things reflected my taste, and had a kind of media aspect to them. I had seen a lot of performances and was interested in the form, but not in terms of conducting workshops or getting the community involved. Most of the performers who came up—like Tim Miller, like Bob and Bob, like Kembra Pfahler—would do their performances and then leave: in that respect, it was like a screening.

... I found out about artists partly because I knew places from the City, but mostly it was from reading *The Village Voice*. At that point Sally Banes was reviewing performance art and dance, and was a really good writer; I looked to her column a lot, and also just looked in the listings to see who was performing in New York at different venues, whether they were written about or not. I made it a rule that I would never book anyone unless I had seen them perform myself. People also sent tapes a lot, which was okay, but again I found it to be really difficult to judge a performance on the basis of a tape or other people's recommendations.

... You have to realize that when I started working at Hallwalls, performances were taking place in the gallery; there were clip lights on the ceiling, or you'd readjust the track lights away from paintings and toward the performers instead. ... We couldn't set up for a performance until the gallery was closed for the evening. We had to take the art off the walls, and we started setting up at 5 o'clock for an 8 o'clock performance. ... We didn't have the kind of budgets to fly people in from any great distance, or to pay them very much. So we weren't looking that far, and we weren't looking past a certain level of technical difficulty in terms of staging. One good thing about the scene in New York was that people were performing in clubs where they'd show up with a shopping cart, like Ethyl Eichelberger, and didn't really give two shits about the lighting; all they needed was a microphone and some sort of light on them, and they could pull off a performance. In some ways that was a kind of necessary developmental stage for us to go through as well: necessary in terms of budget and accessibility, to present those people. And then as their work got more complex, as those people developed as artists, the performance program grew to accommodate them.

... There were a lot of motivations [for selecting artists], but I don't think trying to identify the next big artists was really a major motivating factor, because there wasn't anything we were able to offer them in terms of publicity. We were just another small gig on their tour. At lot of times it was very early in their career, but they weren't leaving here with anything but Hallwalls on their résumé. One of the reasons for doing the books [including Rachel Rosenthal's *Gaia, Mon Amour*, 1983, and John Jesurun's *Ojo Caliente*, 1988] and records we did [Christian Marclay's *Record without a Cover*, 1985] was so that although artists were coming to Buffalo and not being paid a lot of money and performing for maybe 50 people—which to us was a good turnout—they were leaving with something that would add to their career, allow us to publicize the artists, and in turn to publicize Hallwalls.

Steve Gallagher's comments here are culled from a phone conversation on December 2, 1994.

Hal Barber's Talent Bonanza, a closed-circuit video performance and talent competition conceived and directed by Stephen Gallagher, Nov. 30, 1985. A wall of video monitors and cameras separated the live audience from the performers. L-R: 2 "judges," Mike Huber as Hal Barber, Ludmilla Whearty. Photo: Nancy Parisi



PERFORMANCE ON/AND VIDEO

Video Viewing Room, February 3-29, 1984

Excerpts from program notes by Stephen Gallagher

... In the '60s, performance was embraced by artists reacting against an art "System" which was seen as metamorphosing the artists' aesthetic object into the marketplace's commodity and hence was complicit with, if not subsidized by, the network of corporate conglomerates then waging the war in Vietnam. The strategy offered as a counter to this metamorphosis was, of course, to produce art that was object-less, art which was conceived as uncollectable and unbuyable because intangible.

... As performance entered the '70s, the initial political status of the medium began to wane as formal issues developing out of performance—such as the function of experience and the application of phenomenology—became predominant concerns of a number of artists (paralleling developments in Minimal and Conceptual art, especially a renewed interest in the role of the spectator and of time).

... The fact that [aspirations of reaching a wider public] have become a predominant concern in the '80s, as artists "[reject] the previous generation's serious, analytic, intellectual attitude toward art" [source omitted] and begin to emulate popular forms, signals a re-definition of the avant-garde in performance as we have come to know it. If we are to retain the label "avant-garde" (and there is perhaps no reason we should), then it must be recognized as a bastardized version of the activity previously identified by its position on the fringes of popular culture. ... [T]he primary aesthetic issues of this decade are no longer purely formal, but instead reflect an engagement with larger cultural concerns—performance has again embraced politics. In contradistinction to the '60s, performance artists of the '80s openly seek the "status" of the commodity—

emulating theater and television.

It is no accident that concurrent with these interests we have seen the rise of video as both an art form and as a cheap and efficient method of documentation, along with the growth of public access cable, as well as artists' television networks. Video has certainly replaced the photograph as the preferred method of documenting performance. More importantly, ... video, because of its immediacy and the generally intimate nature of its viewing context, can embody a "presence" which is similar to that of the living performance artist. Similarly, for those artists working with popular forms, video—because of its mechanical relationship to TV—can resemble the commercial television program (although the video would play to a vastly smaller audience).

... [A]rtists who embrace popular forms wholeheartedly often produce work that is indistinguishable from the real thing. And, as Sally Banes writes, "If it's only a bad version of the real thing, why not turn the channel and watch the real thing?" Of course, there are those who will claim that by embracing popular forms wholeheartedly without any of the convictions of those forms, one can put the spectator into a state of jeopardy—a more active viewing state wherein an individual is forced, based on his/her preconceptions about what TV should be, to decide whether or not the work merits attention. These artists, again, run the risk that their "deconstructive" efforts will be seen as simply sloppy television.

Performance On/And Video included documentation of Hallwalls performances by Ann Magnuson, Mike Kelley, Tony Biltoni & George Scherer, Karen Finley, Tim Miller & John Bernd, and Eric Bogosian; as well as original video works by Barbara Allen & Carol Clements, Tom Rubnitz, and Fred Bacher.

MARK C. GOREY, *"It Felt Like a Concussion,"* *Second Story*, October 24, 1984: On Monday night, October 15, Mark Pauline [of Survival Research Laboratories] came to Buffalo and Hallwalls armed with two fifty-minute videotapes highlighting his career as a machine performance artist. These paramilitary extravaganzas, which star menacing machinery, mummified animals, and an array of weaponry that might be owned by your neighborhood terrorist group, are meant to scare, horrify, sicken, and in some twisted way entertain the audience.

... The performances are designed with the intention of being viewed live. The close proximity of audience to mayhem (yes, there are people, at least in San Francisco, who arrive early for front row seats) turns the theme of mortal danger into a reality. Seen as video, no sense of danger exists in the performances any longer. ... [L]aughter, which at times seemed too hearty, was the predominant reaction of the safely distanced crowd at Hallwalls.

In fact, attempting to watch both fifty-minute tapes with a half-hour question and answer session between almost put the room to sleep. The repetition of imagery, machinery, and destruction was tiresome. Only the uncomfortable folding chairs kept people awake and in search of a tolerable position throughout the second video. The intended punch of the short and powerful performances was reduced by overkill to an annoying tap. The live event, however, could deliver a stunning psychological, emotional, and very possibly physical blow. ... A difficult show to take on the road, nothing more harmless than their videotapes will be passing through this area, while a trip to San Francisco will be necessary if you want to see it live.

Six years after the Hallwalls screening, Artpark invited Pauline and Survival Research Laboratories to present a new work live in Lewiston, NY in 1990—which was ultimately cancelled due to its controversial content, provoking a demonstration at which 18 Western New York media and performance artists were arrested.

MIKE HUBER: I first started performing at Hallwalls without a real sense of what I wanted to achieve, just knowing that the idea of performing sounded interesting and fun. I played there with my rock band (Pokalon) and soon started getting involved with any performance that was looking for people—Steve Gallagher's *A Common Bond* (1985); Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks' *Housing Project* (1985). I also started doing my own work as part of the local cabaret shows, and then I did some full length shows as Hal Barber (fictional host of a simulated talent and talk show directed by Steve Gallagher when Huber was still in high school, 1986).

I'm not sure how the Hal thing happened. One night I was playing a game in the gallery—at that point it was also the performance and screening space—which led to a discussion with Steve Gallagher about ideas for a game show. The next day Steve tells me that the show is on the calendar for next month. So then it was time to figure out what to do.

Most of my work at Hallwalls came about the same way. A show would be scheduled and I would make a commitment to do something, and then figure out what that thing was. The only rule that I followed was that I would do something different each time, so I tried drumming, singing, dancing, talking, and whatever came to mind. Each show was sort of an experiment—a game—to see what would happen. I wasn't worried about developing my work or getting recognized (although I was doing both of these things anyway). I imagine many artist-run spaces started this way: providing a place for artists to play. After working at a large, more established art institution (the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis), I realize how vital a place like Hallwalls is.

Now I work at a preschool and I perform, sing, play music, paint, sculpt, tell stories every day. I often find myself sitting with a few 4-year olds at a table with materials such as newspaper, tape, cardboard tubes and string. The children work with a sense of adventure and excitement that I can only dream of having. When they finish, some objects can be hung on the wall or displayed on tables, and other things just fall apart, but the important thing is the experience—the process, not the product.

For Hallwalls to be vital in the future, it must continue to focus on the artists and their journeys. Some of these artists will later be deemed "important," and most will be forgotten by art historians. Hallwalls is a space for people to play, where the activities can't necessarily be defined, categorized or even described accurately, but must be experienced firsthand. Therefore it must always be changing. Visiting the new space excited me. People now have to rethink what Hallwalls is and can be. I have no idea what it will be doing in 5 or 10 years—and as long as the future remains a mystery, it is a very needed space.

The Hal Barber Show incorporated performances by such acts as Dr. Strange, Little Rodney, Ludmilla O., Shimera, and Green Jello [later renamed Green Jelly].

MARK ANDERSON: It's not that I don't care about anything other than my own performances at Hallwalls, I just don't know much about what goes on when I'm not there. (This is owing to the fact that I don't live in Buffalo, *but rather in Milwaukee*, which is not unlike Buffalo in many respects extrinsic to this writing I'm doing you're reading.) I do know that David Cale has performed there, and in fact did so shortly before I did one time, and as a kind of joke, Ron Ehmke and I took David's program, conspicuously crossed out his information and wrote mine above and in-between the title and biography and so on (if you can picture that), then used it for my program. I thought it was funny. Ron did, too. And maybe one or two other people did, but I'm not sure.

That was my first appearance at Hallwalls, I think. I'm uncertain of that because whereas I know there was a second (not a solo, but a collaboration with Ann Carlson), I have this ghostly notion that I appeared as a soloist more than once, but I'll betcha that's not true. The phantom solo might actually be a performance in a different city in Western New York on a program curated by Mr. Ehmke, and thus I may be mixing memories, which doesn't matter so much except now that I think of it, it occurs to me that on a very deep level I think that Ron Ehmke = Hallwalls. Or something.

And of course none of that matters beyond the personal, I think, unless of course you allow that anything that happens to me is important—at least to me—happening when it did (and that it did at all), and is somehow connected to the parts of the world that we share, you and I, whether or not you are going to continue reading this to the end.

In my personal cosmosphere, the fact of Mr. Ehmke's (and by extension Hallwalls') support of my work—even some stuff I now look back on with more than a little wincing and shuddering (which assessment has more to do with my own perspective than as an indication of his curatorial eye ((I hope)))—um ... sorry, I got lost. Drop that line of thinking.

Let me say this: an artist's career—well, my career—has happened—at all—as the result of my attempts at articulating and communicating through art, but also as the result of the influence and interference of and by curators and administrators who—for whatever reason—decided to put their stamp on me, or add mine to their collection. And if they asked you (me) to come back!—better and better. And a third (or fourth?) time!— ... (I'm speechless).

While Hallwalls has had a longer and bigger life than my brief visits, and a beefier impact upon its community than mine on it, it has had another kind of significance for me, which may seem slight in the face of 20 years of art and artists and audiences. My visits occurred during a particularly lively span, 1986-91. These years were lively for me, beginning with a big boost from the PS 122 Field Trips program, and climaxing in having my solo, *Manual*, commissioned through the National Performance Network's Creation Fund. Between these bookends were a lot of gigs of various sorts around the country and in Milwaukee, and I was learning a lot, and figuring out my art and so on. When I did my first performance at Hallwalls (1987), I was getting used to doing evening-length solos (some evenings were shorter than others), and whereas I now feel better at handling that kind of responsibility, it was important for me to be able to stumble and agonize over the weaker parts in front of a paying audience. (Maybe I should have been paying them, but it was the other way around; and I'd like to say to those who were there, I'm sorry, but everything that happened was necessary).

My apparently second visit was in 1989, in residence with Ann Carlson, during which we created a nice big messy piece called *Secret*, which sprawled all over the gallery, and involved dancers, kids, birds on video, a chorus, and a few other elements, much of which felt right and went well, and some of which never really happened. But this, too, was proper, being process-oriented work, and dwelling within the atmosphere of uncertainty that surrounds the creation of a large performance with a bunch of strangers in about two weeks. I had worked in this way before—collaborating, creating from scratch—and I was able to learn more about creative work and collaboration from this experience.

I might not have delivered a major hit each time I worked at Hallwalls, but I don't think that is the only measure of success. The important thing, I think, occurred in the exchange. In both of my visits, I gained in more ways than just having a paying gig, and I hope and trust the audiences got something for their time and money. (Of course, I could be wrong in my assessment; in fact, it's been over five years since they last called)

I think those years were lively for others, too, with a growing national awareness of new performance work (growing, of course, since the last period of growth), and an increase in commissioning and touring, and unless I've entirely lost a reasonable sense of perspective, I think all this must have had a measurable impact upon artists, presenters, and audiences. (I suppose that could be measured in some way—by vague recollection, if nothing else. Go ahead, try it.) And I wonder if that changed for others as it did for me. The changes happened through a combination of personal circumstances and

other stuff, such as trouble at the NEA, aesthetic/political changes in curatorial taste, the rise and fall of funding levels at different venues, and so on. Maybe I'm just out of the loop, but I sense a leveling-off has occurred, which, perhaps, is reasonable after a lot of growth. (I've spent more time at home, have been writing and directing plays, and only recently began concentrating on new solo work.) (The number is 414-964-3430.)

That Hallwalls has been around for 20 years, having had an unmeasurable impact on artists and audiences both at home and however far the ripples extend, is a testament to perseverance and survival in the face of many changing elements. What's most important about that is what it has to do with me: it has helped me along by giving me opportunities, it has introduced me to the work of other artists who have influenced me, and it has cared enough to ask how I've been since we last met. Perhaps that is true for you, too.

ALEX GELENCSEK: When I first came to Hallwalls in 1986, I was required to as part of a class taught by Ron Ehmke. The performance group he was working with—Public Domain—did a show there in which they moved the audience around and turned the Vault into their playground. It was exciting and fun, and the class was later required to participate in a large performance of theirs at UB which simulated the campus protests of the '60s. I got to be friends with Public Domain and was invited to work with them.

There was other performance going on at the time by Tony Conrad, Fred Bacher, and Steve Griffith. Steve put together a whole night of performances commenting on the new age, called the "Sardonic Divergence." Another big event I won't forget is the night of Halloween installations at some creepy building; Jody Lafond took the audience on a blind tour of the roof, where we held on to a rope that guided us across.

I also got to work on performances with other artists that Hallwalls brought to town, like James Bergeron, who was interested in random spiritual connections between people; Fiona Templeton, who was working with the elements of performance in a spiritual way; and Ann Carlson, who was trying to get the body to speak through language. We even tried to keep our own workshop going, called Performance Hockey.

The art community was ripe with performance, and I was lucky to be able to take advantage of the scene it created. I made a million friends in no time. It was a very special time in my life, to have so many people that I liked like me back.

As indicated here, Alex Gelencsek performed at Hallwalls many times, both in her own work and in productions by other artists. She worked as the organization's House Manager from 1989-91. Her comments are adapted from a statement written for this publication.

RICHARD HUNTINGTON, "Buffalo Becomes a Stage for Fiona Templeton's Performance Art," *The Buffalo News*, February 7, 1988: ... With the Theater of Mistakes, co-founded with several others in 1974 in London, [Fiona] Templeton established a kind of theater that was firmly pitted against traditional writing, acting, and directing methods. In her view, traditional theater had lost its power to break its conventions—even assuming that it wanted to do such a thing.

"I didn't like the way the way theater was stuck in its hierarchies, the way things are done for reasons of ego," she said. "It is not interesting to me to have a whole lot of people conditioned by one person, to have half a dozen actors trying to conform to one director.

"It bothers me that traditional theater assumes so much. A set that shows somebody's living room—I just can't accept it. I know these are conventions, but I have trouble seeing beyond what is literally there."

... One of her influences when she was still a teenager was artist Yves Klein. This great iconoclast of modern art, with his "human brushes," his blowtorches and his ubiquitous "International Klein Blue," practiced an art that made painting and sculpture into a kind of reluctant theater.

During the time she was a model for a life class at Edinburgh Art College (while studying for her master's degree), she began to formulate her definitions of performance and audience.

"I thought it was strange that all these people were looking at me and were supposed to be making 'art,'" she said. "Supposedly they were being active, I was being passive. But what if it were the other way around? ... At one point I looked down from the model stand and saw them as audience."

Fiona Templeton performed at Hallwalls in 1987 (Thought/Death) and 1995 (Recognition). For more information on her 1988 residency and workshop, see the chapter "Close Encounters."

DAVID BUTLER: In 1986 musician David Kane and I did our first of many collaborative performances at Hallwalls. When we started on that day in April, 60 happy, anxious people filled the seats of the Vault; when we finished two and a half hours later, 7 nasty, whiny martyrs were all that remained. It was the beginning of a long train of lessons regarding what to do and what not to do while performing one's own work. Below is a condensed list of rules compiled from my experiences.

RULES OF PERFORMANCE ART:

1) Never allow a musician with a "sense of humor" to control any part of a performance, particularly when that means having to sit in a four-foot box until the "humorous" musician thinks you should come out. Musicians have no real concept of time; to them, hours seem like minutes. This can create a painful situation for all involved.

2) Never allow easy access to the exit. In some cases, artists are advised to perform between the audience and the exit door. It is also best for performers to avoid hiding behind curtains, scrims, and walls for great lengths of time, as audience members may use the perception that they are not being seen as an opportunity to sneak out.

3) What you think is the most important thing in the universe—The Answer, The Connection, The Work Which Will Affect Generations—is more than likely really boring.

4) If you do plan on boring your audience to death, trying shocking or actually entertaining them intermittently throughout the piece. This will add contrast to your performance and leave your audience with the misguided hope that something interesting may be about to happen. Some familiar examples:

- Wild, incomprehensible screaming
- Surprise nudity
- Bathroom humor

5) Know what your performance is about, or at least be able to bullshit about it. The genre of Performance Art is most often seen by the uncultured masses as self-indulgent, badly acted crap. The average American fails to understand the purpose of self-indulgent crap: to entertain oneself at the expense (literally) of others. If one of these art tourists asks you the age-old question, "I don't get it; what does it mean?," try one of the following answers, all of which have been used by the professionals:

- (With fake intensity:) "A wry and poignant comment on man's inhumanity to man." (courtesy of Tony Billoni)
- (Quietly:) "It's about the decay of western civilization." (David Kane)
- (Coldly:) "It's about my angry homosexual childhood."
- (Yelling:) "I WAS ABUSED!"
- (Sincerely:) "It wasn't a play, it was a 'living painting.'"
- (Passionately:) "It's about COLOR!"
- (Honestly:) "It was a juxtaposition of environmental issues, ancient pagan rituals, biblical stonings, fish, druids, constant unanswered phone calls, and being trapped in a four-foot box by a musician with a 'sense of humor.'"
- (Answering the question with another question:) "What does WHAT mean?"

6) When in doubt, go for the laughs.

David Butler and David Kane received a 1989 Interdisciplinary Project Regrant, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation.

PAT OLESZKO: HUMOR'S THE ODDITY

Commissioned performance (March 31-April 1, 1989)
and installation, (April 4-28, 1989)

I Knew They Could Be Assholes If They Wanted to Be
(afterthoughts by Pat Oleszko, 1995)

I was doing a vision of the Odyssey at Hallwalls entitled "Humor's The Oddity," featuring Yo-lysses, a Greek restaurateur who gets waylaid on a simple journey resupplying Trojans for the diner and experiences a series of adventures that stun but never daunt him. In his epic return home, Yo meets up with Sy Clops, an anthropomorphic pile of trash with a TV for a head; the Sirens, several bare-breasted women with their tits as eyes singing out of clasped hands with fingers as moveable mouths; and, of course, that difficult maneuver between Silly and Charybdis, the many-headed monster

and the whirlpool. On this occasion the monster was portrayed by a six-person butt puppet which advanced fool moon to the horror-eyes-on, features painted, tainted on those hairy buttocks, gnashing, gnarling and devouring putrid dolls into their cracked interiors. It was high drama for sure but matched better by those minutes previous when this artist had taken those meted actors, an assordid accompaniment of volunteers and Hallwalls staff of the male persuasion in for make-up. I stationed myself in the bath-



Pat Oleszko, *Humor's the Oddity*, Mar. 31, 1989
Photo: Paul Defrain

room with magic markers, pimple cover and room mist while the men lined up outside to present their buttocks for my perusal. Boldly each entered—and was baldly ordered to drop trou as I took Pentel in hand and painted a smarmy visage on their hairy-ed flanks. I did six assholes, one after another, that evening (and wasn't even tired). They took their punishment like men, bent over in that compromising position, clutching their cobbles against further dismay. Then moments later they sashayed out en mass, farting and wheezing and shaking their about-faces to the gape-ing Buffalonians. After a short time of untoward horror, Yo-lysses escapes a certain dearth and the monster retreats into the protective abyss. I am proud. My male consorts have presented their rears admirably, even danced cheek to cheek (which is not bad, considering they were assholes). It was yet another perfect moment for performantz f'art.

In addition to this commissioned project, Pat Oleszko presented the performance Where Fools Russian at Hallwalls in September 1986 and another new installation, The Errant Space Museum, in conjunction with the organization's 20th anniversary, April-May 1995.

WAYS IN BEING GAY

November 3-19, 1988

Excerpt from program notes by Ronald Ehmke

Around the time of [the 1987 Hallwalls appearance by performers associated with New York's women-run WOW Cafe], I began thinking more deeply about the connections between performance art and gay sexuality. Certainly each underwent a radical transformation as a result of its encounter with feminism in the '60s and '70s. And each is in some sense "about" the presentation of self, the politicization of autobiography, the shaping of a persona for public display. Drag (male and female alike) is the most obvious example of this self-fashioning, but the very fact, the very act of being openly gay—rendering visible what a repressive social order would prefer to ignore—constitutes a kind of 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week performance piece.

Thomas Huhn, writing in the Spring 1983 issue of *Art and Text*, elaborates on the connection. Citing the gay male appropriation of construction worker attire ("the uniform which their perceived victimizers wore") in the early '70s, Huhn proposes that "one of the impulses for wearing the clothing of one's oppressors is the perception that by so doing we somehow transcend an enemy threat. By identifying with one's oppressors the subject places himself above the particular stations of victimizer and victim." This same strategy, he claims, has been adopted by artists outside the mainstream: "Performance artists both adapt to and transcend particular aspects of the tradition in which they find themselves working." That "tradition" is the peculiar blend of visual art, theater, and show business most people have in mind when they talk about "performance," and while it may seem a little excessive to refer to show biz as "the oppressor," artists (and gay people, to an even greater extent) are certainly familiar with the experience of being victimized by mass culture, and at the same time feeling inseparable from it, and working inside that contradiction.

The 1988 Ways In Being Gay festival included performances by Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, Eileen Myles, Lawrence Champoux, David Roche, Alice B. Theatre, Keegan & Lloyd, Steve Griffith, Ronald Ehmke, Other Voices, Kate Stafford & Lillian Killian in a play by Alison Rooney, Reno, Sara Cytron, Jaffe Cohen, and Danny McWilliams.

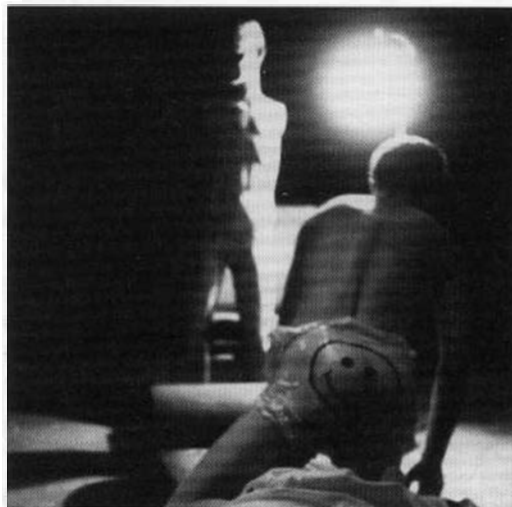
STEVE GRIFFITH: AN APOLOGY

First performed on World AIDS Awareness Day,
December 1, 1989

I'm sorry. The performance is not ready. Not ready, that is, for public consumption. It is still in the testing stages. Early trials under controlled circumstances have proven successful but the subjects of those trials cannot be fully trusted. Some received the real thing and some, a placebo. And the paperwork is not complete. The artist is doing his best, you understand, but these things can't be rushed. A performance takes time and money. Grants must be written, subtexts defined. I know you've heard of one in New York and Paris but you haven't the means to see it. You will just have to wait. All good things come to those who wait.

Please, do not blame me. I am only a spokesman for the artist. I was hired for this job because of my firm speaking manner and empathetic demeanor. I have been hired. I am performing a job. I am sorry. The performance is not ready. The paperwork is tremendous and there is not enough help. Some reports are scribbled, hardly legible, impossible to transcribe even if there was someone to do it. But I don't need to tell you this. Remember, a performance takes time and money. Art can't be made under the gun. Inspiration knows no deadline. Rough edges must be smoothed. The egregious, extricated. And, of course, the artist cannot afford to offend. At every level, he needs to test the waters. Mark the degrees. He wants no mistakes. And, trust me, the artist knows you wouldn't settle for anything less than a masterpiece. Does a masterpiece appear overnight? Is it scribbled on a napkin at dinner or scrawled on a book's endpaper? No, of course not. Even the artist cannot be sure if he has created a masterpiece. It takes men and women who have spent a good part of their lives talking and reading and writing to find that rare diamond in the rough. They have the genius to discover genius. We must put our faith in them. They alone keenly know a masterpiece is eternal. It survives its own era; it lives beyond generations. It sometimes outlasts its own civilization. Perhaps only one, if that, appears in one's lifetime. Only one. If that. Even for those men and women, sometimes it takes years to discover a masterpiece. Think of those who've died, uncertain to their final breath if they'd known a

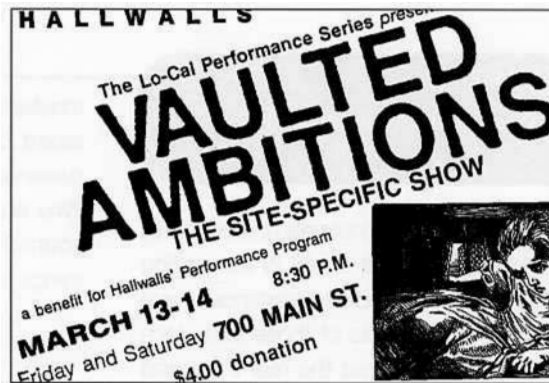
masterpiece in their lifetime. You deserve to be nourished by the great powers of a masterpiece. You deserve the great healing powers of a masterpiece. Why numb yourself with entertainments? Why deceive yourself with works in progress? Be patient. Good things come to those who wait.



Steve Griffith, *In Another Lifetime*
(*I am a Jordanaire*), Nov. 11, 1988.

I am sorry. You haven't been chosen as subjects either. Apparently you do not possess the needed characteristics. Perhaps you display less need for great art. Perhaps your aesthetics are, at present, too vaguely defined. I cannot really say. I am only a spokesman. But everything involves a process. Step by step, succor is on its way. Perhaps when it arrives, your neediness will be more apparent. Or perhaps you show your need too conspicuously. So easily, you are, led to chairs facing in the same direction. Sitting there, looking ... at what? The manifestation of your disappointment? Did you need to see it? You should be somewhere else, making love or buying groceries. Do something. Don't just sit there. Your helplessness cries pathetically from your repose. And nobody likes a beggar. And this is not a placebo. This is an apology. I'm sorry. The performance is not ready.

Steve Griffith's many performances at Hallwalls include *In Another Lifetime* (*I am a Jordanaire*), for which he received a 1988 Hallwalls Inter-arts Regrant, funded by the NEA and the Rockefeller Foundation, and Elton John: *The Rock Opera* (with Public Doberman, 1990). He now lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland.



Site-specific works by Buffalo performers.
Mar. 13-14, 1987. (Detail.)

Q: What factors into your decision-making process when choosing artists/companies for your season? Do you program primarily for your audiences or your artists? Do you program for a specific aesthetic?

RONALD EHMKE (*Performance Curator, 1986-94*): Most of my programming decisions, for better or worse, are largely intuitive. I rely heavily on the recommendations of artists I know, reviews (negative as well as positive) which catch my eye, and especially work which delights or upsets me. I have no real aesthetic agenda (no single agenda, that is); I try to remain open to just about every conceivable performance style (except for slickly packaged dance/music/theater companies—mainly because my space doesn't have the necessary equipment and facilities to present such work properly, and also because that kind of work has other venues).

I don't program for "MY artists" or "MY audiences," because both of those are mythical constructs. (The wording also implies a certain possessiveness that is particularly unappealing to me.) Instead, I program for myself, and trust that my instincts as a combination curator-artist-fan will appeal to a broad enough coalition of spectators to fill the 70 seats of the theater. May sound egocentric, but we all know what the late Rick Nelson said about trying to please everybody. Besides, after I leave, somebody else with a wholly different aesthetic (or non-aesthetic) will replace me and inflict THEIR taste on Buffalo.

Excerpted from "Artist/Presenter Impact: Dialogue in Print," Poor Dancer's Almanac New(s)letter, Dance Theater Workshop, Spring 1991.

HOLLY BEYE (*Founder, Holly's Comets, Woodstock, NY*): Hallwalls played a significant role in the lives of Holly's Comets in two ways. The first of these was the invitation to perform our improvisational theater in the Hallwalls Vault in 1989. Ron Ehmke had discovered us when he'd been an administrator of an NEA/Rockefeller Foundation competition for some funding we were after. Performing at Hallwalls validated us as bona fide troopers whose ages—we were all over 65 at the time—were not so much a limitation to our endeavors as a matter of celebration. Holly Beye, a playwright and the group's founder, and dancer/choreographer Naomi Leaf Halpern had spent the five days previous to our performance doing improvisational theater with children in Buffalo's Montessori School, and some of these young people joined us onstage in the Vault. The second gift to us from Hallwalls was funding to complete an original videotape we called *Refractions*, created and directed by Naomi. Seven Comets performed in *Refractions*, which is a video poem about the joys and sorrows of growing old.

What do we remember about our stay in Buffalo? The extraordinary range of sophistication of the Hallwalls programs—we'd thought you only found this level of sophistication in New York City! And the generosity of the staff, and the dear Lenox Hotel, and the Greek restaurant where we dined nightly on the most delicious black olives and feta cheese outside of Greece—the taste still lingers in our memories.

Pre-event publicity and program notes by Ronald Ehmke

The decision to get a tattoo, to pierce a body part—no matter how innocuous the location or design—is to embark on a life-long performance project, to use the flesh as canvas, to place oneself on exhibit.

The subject of body modification (both temporary and permanent) can be explored in a number of ways: academic, sociological, cultist, exploitationist, fetishistic, and so on, each with its own language, critical focus, and underlying ideological assumptions. Tattooing, piercing, and scarification can be seen as highly personal explorations of ecstasy and pain, aesthetic strategies developing alongside similar movements within the "avant-garde" traditions of body art/performance/video art, or as simply the latest "underground" phenomena to be exploited and co-opted by the "mainstream" media.

In assembling tonight's "carnival attractions," I have chosen to allow all of these ways of speaking and understanding to exist side by side without privileging

any one of them as necessarily more valid than the others. I am as interested in how people talk about body modification as I am in what they actually say/show.

This free-form carnival of skin markings, mutilated hides, and illustrated men and women is a theatrical event in which the lines between actors and audience are erased completely; viewing pedestals will allow you to become a "living sculpture" and display your own body of work. Area tattoo artists and their models will be on hand to demonstrate and discuss techniques and aesthetic considerations; film and video presentations will provide broader contexts for understanding this increasingly popular art form.

The first Tattoo You!—which evolved into an annual fundraising event—was presented in conjunction with a Graduate Student Conference on Writing and the Body, presented by the SUNY Buffalo Department of English. The event included video excerpts from horror films, mondo movies, tabloid TV, surgical training tapes, and documentaries; audio tapes of pop songs; a book fair; photographic exhibitions; and live demonstrations.

"The Hideous Debris of a Hell-Bent Culture." *Tattoo Savage Magazine* N95 [1994]: Much as I hate to admit it, Buffalo rocks! Yep, no shit. It's a happening town with lots of tattooed folks, and plenty of pierced people. One of the best things in Buffalo is the HallWalls contemporary art center, an arts space for real people. Founded in 1974 by a group of primo Low Brow artists, HallWalls has something for everybody.

... Though HallWalls provided the space and lots of visual stimuli, the folks who attended [*Tattoo Me 3*, the third annual event] were an integral part of the exhibition—"the audience is the art." What a cool concept—have an art show where you invite the art to show up, then listen to great blues tunes, drink, flirt, and party. That's much more interesting than nailing yet another randomly-paint-splattered canvas onto oh-so-trendy pristine white gallery walls.

BEYOND GINGER: A Celebration of Women Performers
 May 8-23, 1993
 Excerpts from program notes by Ronald Ehmke

Beyond Ginger takes a long, respectful look at many varieties of "women's work": performance art, political satire, street activism (carried out publicly in demonstrations, and anonymously in the form of wheatpasted art posters), poetry, dance, comic books, and video art, among others. The series looks back to such unlikely, underappreciated historical precedents as labor organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the burlesque dancers of the post-war era; and it looks ahead, to a new generation of young women who read *Sassy* and "riot grrrl" zines, and who listen to fast, loud bands like Hole and L7. ... Although all the artists in this series are women, the aim is not primarily to look at the construction of gender, but to celebrate the trouble these women are making: creating new political and cultural possibilities, refusing to surrender to the anti-feminist "backlash," and shaking up mass-media stereotypes. One such cliché is the kind of performer played by Tina Louise on the deathless sitcom *Gilligan's Island*: Ginger, the air-headed sexpot who can only function by remembering old movie roles she's played (all written, needless to say, by men).

The series included performances and readings by Judith Jackson, Masani Alexis DeVeaux, DanceNoise, Elizabeth Burns, Susan Burns, and Lea Delaria; film and video profiles of the Guerrilla Girls and Scarlett Harlot; street art by Pam Butler; a library of zines produced by women; restroom installations of burlesque-era photographs; an "Alternative Mother's Day Matinee"; a panel discussion and concert featuring Buffalo-based musicians; and the world premiere of Not Bad for a Girl, a video documentary on women rock musicians by clinical psychologist Lisa Apramian.



For more information on Hallwalls' Performance program, see Steve Gallagher's essay "1982-89: The Wonder Years (A Personal View)" and the chapter "One-Night Stands," elsewhere in this volume.

MUSIC

DAVID KENNEDY: MUSIC IN THE LAND OF THE LOTUS-EATERS

The best damn music you never heard in your life. If you've resided in Western New York at any point in the past twenty years, this unfortunately is an apt summarization of Hallwalls' Music program. Viewed by many as a mere addendum to the ways and proliferation of our more affluent and visible media cousins (film, video, the plastic arts, et al), music has nevertheless continued to operate in those half-lit recesses left untenanted by more marketable disciplines.

Recently I heard a fellow board member evince some surprise that Hallwalls was in the business of promoting concerts. Well, perhaps "business" is too strong a term here; it's more like a labor of love from anyone who ever had anything to do with a concert event at Hallwalls. Yet, through all the indifference, ignorance and just plain hostility toward anything new and creative in the world of music, the agenda continues to exist now and hopefully for the future as well.

Peruse the program lists for the past twenty years and you will discover a veritable Who's Who of twentieth-century composers and players. Both on its own and in conjunction with the North American New Music Festival, June in Buffalo, and the various NYSCA Network tours, Hallwalls has played a key role in bringing new sounds to Western New York. Avant-garde, modern, new music, jazz, Black classical, free improvisation, rock in opposition: whatever the moniker, Hallwalls has presented the music. Categories are just something to be used for publicity purposes, and publicity has always been a sore point for the program. Definitions fell by the wayside long ago. Our criteria have been: Do we like it? Is it important? Can we afford it? We do it because we believe in it.

Music is ethereal, not a commodity to have and to hold. Patience and concentration are often required of the listener. Music exists at Hallwalls because Buffalo has no other venue for sounds of this quality. The music that goes unheard here today will probably dictate the schlock emitted from your favorite pop radio station ten years hence. Remember: the subway is not the underground.

David Kennedy is a music writer and a current Hallwalls board member.



John Lurie, Jan. 5, 1980. Photo: Scott Rucker

Tony Conrad, who for the past season programmed music and video at Hallwalls, will be taking a leave of absence to teach in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California at San Diego. Tony, a distinguished filmmaker, musician, and performance artist, has been instrumental in creating one of the most exciting music programs on the East Coast, entitled 'The Performing Composer.' His efforts have brought a number of innovative musical talents, e.g. Lydia Lunch, Alex Bernstein, John Lurie, Jeffrey Lohn, Arthur Russell, and David van Tieghem. Scott Rucker will replace Tony Conrad as music director. Scott is the former director of CEPA Photography Gallery and Workshop in Buffalo and is currently directing an historical photography project for CEPA.

Excerpted from December 1979 calendar.

JUINI BOOTH: A PLACE FOR IDEAS WITH WINGS

I've always sought a certain place (or space) where ideas with wings should have air to fly." Juini recalls growing up and out of the Western New York area in search of these spaces he longed for. I guess you could say he found them in many different places.

Upon his return to Buffalo, now a different place from the one he had left (which was something he did not expect), someone told him of an artist-run alternative organization on Essex Street named Hallwalls. "Hearing this," Booth says, "I felt sympathy for many of my generation, never knowing an outlet for their artistic passions." There have always been such places, only somewhere else: the American Center in Paris; the High School for Performing Arts in New York City; the Milky Way in Amsterdam; Banff, Alberta; etc.

"Well, I gathered myself," Juini continues, "wiped the tear from my eye, and that's when I came to Hallwalls—the spring of '79. 'Wow, look at this!' I was doing the music I wanted to do, discovering my artistic passion as well as finding other artists with similar alternative views. My shit was too important to help some fucker sell beer. I'd become a music curator. Wow! How great, but I can't remember ever working that hard for other musicians ... Rather different from anything I'd experienced ... Long hours ... Low pay ... I resign."

He thanks Bill [Currie] and Biff [Henrich] for their understanding. He admits, "The opportunity was enlightening. Everyone should appreciate the painstaking effort made by Hallwalls and its board in presenting programs with such broad-based ideas. These people are among the real treasures of Buffalo and Western New York."

Booth states, "There's a public access directory which lists the names and whereabouts of record companies, jazz clubs, agents, alternative organizations, etc. I was delighted to see Hallwalls listed. This lets me know that Buffalo is on the world map now."

Once upon a North American New Music Festival, Juini had attended so many concerts he needed to rest. It was during saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom's performance at 700 Main Street; pianist Yvar Mikhashoff also seemed to have found the projection room quite suitable for cogitation and a lot of snooze. When Don Metz woke them at the end of Jane's performance, both seemed fresh and ready for the remaining events of the evening.

J. Arthur (Juini) Booth is a jazz musician and composer who served as Hallwalls' music curator in the late '70s.



Lester Bowie at the Tralfamadore Jazz Institute, Oct. 29, 1989.



Rhys Chatham, May 22, 1979

MICHAEL COLQUHOUN: THREE ROOMS

UPSTAIRS:

Two bright moments: Yvar rolling an orange up and down the keyboard during a marathon concert; watching the dancers in the lights rather than my music during a music/dance program. They seemed to float suspended in the golden light. I got lost.

TALES FROM THE VAULT:

The green room. The amazing, graffiti-marked walls of the green room. The autographs on the walls of the Hallwalls green room. The Nancy Sinatras' message for us all on the walls of the Hallwalls green room. Leaving my own message there on the wall of the Hallwalls green room. Miss that green room

Hearing Pete the Geek's band the night his digital delay went nuts and thought it was god or something. Huge waves of fantastic distortion. They went with it. It never happened again. Strange

Playing 16' gazillion notes per second on my piccolo during *Turbulence* on an EBMA gig. Flipinski's been terrified of me ever since—the sonic knife!

The first taste of a cold beer right there in the Vault just after playing.....

The totally twisted alto sax band (me, Metz, Steve Rosenthal, Rey Scott, Louie DeCarlo—Louie????) playing *Hail to the Chief* the night of Clinton's inauguration.

TRICOTISM:

The delicious irony of the new location. I worked at Trico in 1976-77—Dept. 325—drudging away in salvage, exactly one floor beneath the new Hallwalls.

Bringing my Latin band in for the Artists and Models Affair last summer. I was afraid we wouldn't fit in, but we tore the joint up.

And then Yvar again. Opening the new space with his memorial concert—drinking way too much champagne along with every other musician in town. We were the audience from hell, but it was perfection.

Finally, the amazing Metz, who makes me laugh even when I want to rip his lungs out—often

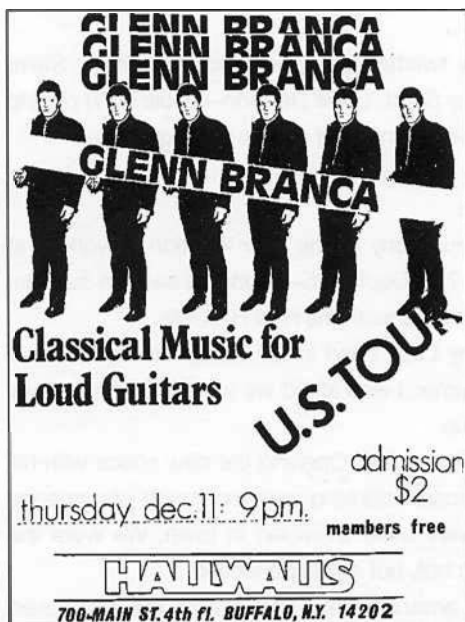
Michael Colquhoun is a flutist and composer who received his Ph.D. in Music at SUNY Buffalo.



Yvar Mikashoff in performance at 700 Main Street, mid-'80s.

JAMES EMERY

As a performer and composer of non-commercial art music, I am always looking for new places to perform. Don Metz, music curator at Hallwalls, has consistently provided opportunities for me as a soloist, with the String Trio of New York, and with my quartet. He does not suffer from the xenophobia which so rampantly afflicts much of the music world these days, and includes presenters, audiences, and musicians. I have nothing but good things to say about Don and Hallwalls; may they both "live long and prosper."



Concert poster, 1980.

JAN WILLIAMS: THE MAINSTREAM OF THE NON-MAINSTREAM

Hallwalls fills what could potentially be an enormous void in Buffalo's cultural life. It's the city's only link to the everyman's avant-garde arts (graphic, plastic, musical, performance, uncatalogable). It's the "can-do" mentality of those that run Hallwalls that makes doing projects there so much fun. It's the expatriate New York City-ite's home away from home. It's getting out of town: not running away, but running to a place that makes you feel like you're in the mainstream of the non-mainstream, surrounded by (mostly) younger (than me) people who are genuinely interested in what I have to say (artistically) and who don't make me feel like I'm (mostly) older (than them) and possibly approaching over-the-hill status. It's hard to quantify just what it is about Hallwalls that has endeared the place to me, and to lots of other people. Lots of things, for sure. All I know is that it would be enormously duller here than it already is (compared to NYC, London, Berlin, Amsterdam), if there were no Hallwalls.

Composer/percussionist Jan Williams co-founded the North American New Music Festival with Yvar Mikhashoff in 1983.



David Van Tieghem, Dec. 15, 1979

SE.M. ^{ensemble} FESTIVAL

**Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Hallwalls & Delaware Park
Buffalo, New York
June 12&13, 1976
Saturday&Sunday**

Linda Brooks *Fantasy Volumes and Landspaces: Form III* Richard Hayman *Music for Sleeping Audience* Ralph Jones *Sources of Naturally Occurring Ultrasonics* Petr Kotik *Intersections 2* Leigh Landy *LaPhase; Regiones vocales* Robert Longo *Convergence and Dispersal* Phill Niblock *Films and Music* Joseph Panone *A Lake Surface Projection* Lune Prods *Condensation: One Mile Radius* Ned Sublette *Songs: Culture Palace Version*



VIDEO

POST-PRODUCED BY CHRIS HILL

1

Fire dream, late November, 1993.
Chris Hill [video curator, 1984-94]

In the months before Hallwalls' move to the Tri-Main Building, I dreamed that I watched its earlier home at 700 Main Street burn down. I forget now whether or not I played a part in setting the fire too, but it occurred after a frustrating encounter, probably a staff meeting, where I felt that no one would respond to the questions I raised about the move.

There's always been a virtual space at Hallwalls that belonged to the people who had worked there before me, familiar by reputation if not by acquaintance. Stashed in the narrow spaces behind the gallery walls and under desks were storage boxes of ephemeral materials: old calendars, flyers and files. In the file folders were lists of ideas that had never resulted in specific programs, phone numbers and things to do that could have been written yesterday but were in fact from five years before. I was fascinated with this ephemeral library, sandwiched into odd spaces at Hallwalls, evidence of the hunting and editing processes other artist-curators brought to the task of making and presenting culture. In the fictional territory of dreamspace, these boxes caught fire first. In this fire dream, is anything saved?

2

Dysfunctional family.
Chris Hill

I came to work at Hallwalls as video curator in 1984 after having worked as a counselor at a women's clinic that ran on a relatively exacting schedule, as most medical facilities do. The first year at Hallwalls was completely disorienting. Anarchy seemed to be the unstated operating principal, and the many projects that were accomplished depended on the vision and tenacity of individual staff members. My sensibilities around a kind of essentialist feminism and professional care-giving, formed during my tenure at the women's health clinic, were now assaulted by the aggression of Barbara Kruger photos on the wall and the approved appropriation of popular culture's oppressive signifiers in Cindy Sherman's work. Working at Hallwalls was decidedly counter-intuitive for me at first, but it became increasingly clear that one could and must turn imbalances and deficits into art strategies. I learned to approach negativity consciously as a structural tool. A psychic that I saw at this time said I was walking along the edge of a street with one foot skipping on top of a high curb and one foot grounded on the road bed. The combination of confrontational art discussions, sincere support, and fluctuating degrees of anarchy was certainly confusing during my first year at Hallwalls and characteristic of much of the following 11 years.

What I eventually understood was that Hallwalls was like a dysfunctional family. While it was often a well-functioning arts organization with an openness around per-



Publicity for a Jan. 13, 1988 production session open to the public. Participants improvised scenes using shared props, costumes, and sets.

sonal and technical resources that almost always encouraged its employees to put in far more effort and commitment than they were ever paid for, the collegial and personal relationships forged through years of education, art-making, competition, falling in love, blindness and deafness, heartbreak, exhilaration, territorial disputes, unified struggle, and bullying grew into an anxious and expansive corpus which I, and, it seemed, most of my co-workers, related to much more like an extended family than a job.

It was dysfunctional in part because the family was large and always poor, and it was difficult to manage so that everyone might feel s/he received her/his share of resources and attention. After all, as adults, we were engaged in our lives' work: playing for keeps, so to speak. We understood that our social marginality was not the result of our work there being a rehearsal for some other authorized stage, though over the years many left for other theaters. Most of us invested in the creation of an oppositional or at least an alternative cultural scene, and for such a project to survive in the climate of the last decade it was no wonder that our psychological health suffered.

When I left Hallwalls in late 1994 and thought about what would come next, I felt suddenly impoverished. I had participated for the last eleven years in what was essentially a non-cash economy. That economy, at least for me working in Hallwalls' media program, was driven by the careful management of meager funding to support shared technical resources for current and future media artists in Buffalo. It was enriched by the immeasurable wealth of a decade's worth of evenings filled with the provocative gestures of immensely talented visiting and local artists, often young and "emerging." And that economy was stabilized by a common understanding that supported the taking of artistic and personal risks, flights and transgressions that would be considered and critiqued, but rarely censored or evaluated in monetary terms.

I felt that living in Buffalo and working at Hallwalls I learned to speak a cultural dialect that continues to nurture me, which I've craved desperately when I've traveled or worked in places where that language isn't spoken. As I leave an alternative arts community and participate in a cash economy, I find myself distinctly marginalized—without the mobility of a savings account, without the respected currency of authorized experience, and

potentially without a community which speaks the same creative language. I remember a former president of the board of Hallwalls, a businessman my age, who shocked those present when he wondered aloud: if we would work for so little, how could we be worth anything in the "real" marketplace?

3

From catalogue essay in *Media Buff.: Media Art of Buffalo, New York* (New York State Artists Series VIII), Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Ithaca, NY, 1988.

Chris Hill

Hallwalls seems to have historically offered its artists, programmers and audiences a site for the performance of an unsettled attention, one which resists or confronts the easy framing of an artist's or a curator's project. If Hallwalls media programming can be provocative and function within a 15-year-old alternative cultural space, it is because of a paradoxical tradition of generous and anxious programmers and administrators who respect, even if they are not always comfortable with, an initiating and problematizing spirit in their co-workers and other artists.

4

Working at Hallwalls in the early 1980s.
Kathy High [video curator, 1980-84]

When I think of my first moments at Hallwalls I remember finding a kind of haven in this weird brick complex of buildings called the "Ice House," a ratty place with lots of nooks and crannies for squirrelling away; there were more people living there than I ever knew. I was naive and really searching for a peer group that "wore well," a place where women worked as much as men, a place where you could do anything you wanted, a place we all owned and ran. Strikingly, all the disciplines interacted with each other, welcoming crossings from film to video, from performance to music, from

installations to sculpture, painting, photography, etc. Programming was a kind of amorphous activity where everyone had input. Everyone read lots of magazines, spoke with other artists and brought up suggestions about who they wanted to bring. It was a group decision; Hallwalls was truly artist-run, with everyone's curiosity and interests in mind.

I remember long days and nights drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes and talking and talking about our art work, politics, potential projects and futures. I also remember working and working all the time, but because it was with friends and peers, because it was to pull together this project which was so much defined by us and about our own interests and desires, it never felt like work.

5

Programming in the early 1980s. Kathy High

The first exhibition I curated was with Roger Denson, *Installation: Video*, in May 1980. Roger and I decided early on that we would show actual installations as well



Installation: Video, May 1980.

as photographs of past works, and drawings for future works. The artists included in the show (Dara Birnbaum, Patrick Clancy, Wendy Clark, Brian Eno, Ken Feingold, Dan Graham, Gary Hill, Sara Hornbacher, and Shigeko Kubota) represented artists whose works we respected at the time, works which were not readily available in Buffalo, and artists we really wanted to meet/work with. This was always a hidden agenda—to actually be able to talk with the artists you respected.

7

Obscure video and sensational performances. Kathy High

I enjoyed working as a curator because it was a way to work with people and to see work. I loved the long phone conversations late at night discussing the best way to screen artists' works and how to represent their pieces in press releases, etc. I remember I showed Paul McCarthy's tapes documenting his performance about being locked up in a hotel room with lots of meat all around him; I really loved the visceral nature of his tapes. Most people walked out.

Some of the most successful exhibitions from the later part of my time at Hallwalls were "The Live Show" with Jaime Davidovitch and the Potato Wolf Show. These exhibitions were a little crazy, ambitious and ultimately successful because they involved the community to a great extent. "The Live Show" was a weekly Manhattan cable TV show where artists were invited to participate in Jaime Davidovich's own comedic performing. The Buffalo production was the first cable TV show in which Hallwalls ever participated, and it was a way of introducing the Buffalo media community to the potential of cable TV, which was just then getting started around the country. On cable one could screen pre-produced tapes, stage live performances, and conduct telephone call-ins. Tony Billoni was co-host with Jaime. It was a smashing production.

1 0

Programming in the 1980s.
Chris Hill

I came to identify my curatorial task in the early 1980s to be an investigation of authority(s) active in video art practice, in order to position new work against the range of existing aesthetic and/or social assertions. The people with whom I came to work most closely at Hallwalls and in Buffalo were interested in video artists' strategies around the structural possibilities in performance and relationship(s) with audience(s), systems of distribution and transmission, involvements with a vocabulary suggested by the tools and economic infrastructure of independent videomaking, and artists' relationship(s) to narrativity, gender, and popular culture's moralizing ideologies. I am greatly indebted to Kathy High, Bill Currie, Tony Conrad, Barbara Lattanzi, and Steve Gallagher for their provocations as co-workers and inspiration as artists with agendas. The greater media community in Buffalo at the time also supported a remarkably diverse and challenging scene which included the programming, educational, and production resources at SUNY Buffalo's Center for Media Study, the media arts center Media Study/Bufalo, and artist-run CEPA Gallery.

1 1

From program notes for *Family Extensions: Romance, Illness, & the Economy*, 1987
Chris Hill

This show began with a statement by Mako Idemitsu. ... She said that her work, which portrays the communications and generational tensions in the middle-class Japanese "salaryman" family as alienated and sometimes monstrous, was considered in Japan by some to be spiritual pornography. ... If the family is the arena where bonding of all sorts occurs, and the site from which many psychological, social, and political etiological models necessarily evolve, then our representations of the family and the stories we tell about our families, their histories, passions, songs and diseases should, in

fact, conjure up real issues of recognition and identification, commitment and confidence, hostility and rejection in the contemporary media viewer. ... Certainly an ... important feature ... is the presence of television as a storyteller (teller of morality tales).

1 3

From program notes for *Feeling the Faults: Confronting Dis-ease in the Mediated Body*, 1990.
Chris Hill

Over the last year there has been an increasing barrage of images and dictums issued by socially and culturally authorized commercial media promoting an uncontaminated, gender-specific Social Darwinism: survival of the fittest—inevitably, survival of the already privileged, survival of the heterosexually pure, survival of the state-sanctioned American right [sic]/Right. At the same time, the independent and increasingly marginalized cultural community has critiqued this massive denial of existing cultural, economic and psychological differences and continues to explore conditions of physiological, social and media dis-ease where they are to be found... [In this program...] the attentional bodies of the viewer are constantly shifted through states of ease (authorized entertainment, narrative focus, eroticized pleasure, mystification) and disease (horror, anger, guilt, moral containment, violation of personal space and autonomy).

1 4

De-centralized cultural scenes and cultural uplinking.
Chris Hill

It became clear from working in Buffalo, a border city on the "Niagara Frontier," that the authorized video art scene in the U.S. was increasingly a construction of the relatively few curators and distributors who act as filters for the work coming into the resource- and audience-intense cultural centers—mainly New York. Occasional

visits to nearby Toronto for the purpose of checking out V-Tape's distribution collection, for example, would reveal a completely different roster of media artists than would be featured in New York venues. We became interested in the project of researching work that didn't look to either of those centers for authorization. Through serving on juries, traveling, and asking questions, we established ongoing dialogues and exchanges with media artists and organizations in other upstate NY cities, in Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Chicago, San Francisco. We remained interested in why artists or independents on the cultural margins might pick up a video camera and make a tape.



From Media Buff. catalogue essay, 1988.

Chris Hill

The self-authorizing and largely symbiotic relationship between the working artists' projects and the presenting organization which fueled the Hallwalls of the 1970s has evolved [by the mid-1980's] into complex preoccupations with the notion of audience(s). Discussions dwell on concerns with postmodern critical engagements with a pluralistic readership and the construction of a viewing subject, on questions about what kind of audience exists for new and often problematic (media) art in Buffalo and elsewhere. ... Programmers are convinced that Hallwalls must remain a kind of decentralized uplink for some version of contemporary culture, and not merely a downlink from some distanced tastemaking authority.



Infermental 7: Jurying an international videomagazine.

Chris Hill

The invitation in 1987 to participate in the video-magazine project *Infermental*, and to solicit and jury over 300 international submissions, was a remarkable exercise in cultural construction for those of us who

VIDEO



MOCKBA

**VIDEO
MAILART**

Hallwalls Gallery
700 Main St.
Buffalo, New York 14202
U.S.A.

Honorable american colleges!

I was highly glad having got your invitation. It turns like that there are people on the globe still, who can be interested in our existence. To my great regret I couldn't immediately sell to you the videocassette with the films of my own and those of my friends. Our sad reality doesn't assume the invitation of the sort and it (the reality I mean) doesn't dispose the plenty of videotechnique, with I could have taken the advantage of. And I had too little time in reserve indeed—your invitation came on the 27th of November, i.e. in 3 days before the day of dispatch.

'Why am I writing this letter at all?' The thing is that you have given me a shove to undertake a necessary step—that is to reape the films on video and to the end of January 88, I plan to produce the 3 hours cassette: "Cine Fantom" presents the parallel movie and video of Moscow and Leningrad. "Cine Fantom" is the typewritten independent journal on problems of cinema, myself being the editor in chief, as it is. On this cassette there will be represent 6 authors. If your interest in us doesn't vanish, we will be glad to show our films to you. If you had time and wish, we would have asked you to send us any information, what's going on nowadays in american 16mm movie and video. I have read only one book: J. Metas "Movie Journal", dealing with the sixties. What took place in seventies and eighties is the complete government secret for us. I'm looking forward for our fruitful cooperation. Yours Andrei L.

P.S. As for as in our country the writing pens ~~and~~ are taking the role of videocameras you could have shot this letter on video, this being credit to Videomagazin. The phonogramme of this work could have become the male voice reading the text of the letter in English with a heavy Russian accent.

P.P.S. If only our contact doesn't finish at it, I beg you not to resort to the post-mail services.

worked as the editors—Tony Conrad, Peter Weibel, Rotraut Pape and myself—and a welcome opportunity as a de-centralized media community to serve as a cultural up-link.

As any peer jury would, we had our long-standing disagreements and favored work. Pape, a German, and Weibel, an Austrian, were both fascinated with televangelism in the U.S., and with American Lynn Hershman's tape about Jim Jones' homicidal charisma. Our hottest disagreement came after a long day of trying to decide which, if any, of the East German tapes/films to include. Was this work, and other work from Eastern Europe or even Latin America, legible to us? One juror argued that the tapes looked like avant garde films produced in the West in the 1960s; this work was not particularly interesting now; our responsibility was to foreground new media formations. Another juror countered that East Germans worked under conditions of a virtual (Western) cultural blackout—they were reinventing the wheel, and should be supported for doing so even if this kind of work failed to challenge artists now in Western Europe and the U.S.

Later, when screening the work to audiences in Berlin, major criticism circulated around our decision to include documentary-type projects with video "art" in this 5-hour videomagazine. In 1988 should social issue work be considered "art"? The answer represented by *Infermental 7* was that we must ask why a maker in any culture—Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, or the U.S.—would pick up a camcorder. "Art," with its learned codes and history of strategic attitudes, was only one kind of video gesture.

18

From "Catching Up to Video at Home and Abroad," essay in *Infermental 7: Buffalo, NY* catalogue, 1988.

Tony Conrad

What's new in the West is the unprecedented counterpressure that has been built up in late years by the companies that manufacture production equipment for consumers. This sector happens to include some of the most aggressive and unregulably novel industries of



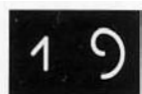
Rotraut Pape, contribution to *Infermental 7* catalogue, 1988.



Stadtwerkstatt, video still from live cablecast, July 1990

recent times, whose (independent) consumers are involved in things like computer self-publishing, video production, home music studio production, and interfacing via telephone lines.

The front of this wave of energy is hardware anxiety. Imagine the videomakers—beset by unfulfillable production ambitions, incomprehensible technological complexities, equipment frustrations, simplistic audience expectations. Like lovers' jokes about sex, and soldiers' jokes about guns, their ironic tapes twist the world on the spit of the makers' preoccupations...



Artwaves and the paradoxical theater of public access TV.

Chris Hill

Artwaves was established in 1986 by Hallwalls co-director Alan Sondheim as a weekly program reaching into the paradoxically public/private stage of people's homes via the publicly accessible channels of cable TV. Ellen Spiro, Brian Springer, Marion Ware, Andrew Deutsch, Ghen Dennis, Melissa Kern, and others over the next 9 years worked as artist-curators to approach *Artwaves* as a new kind of media theater, spawning projects like Springer's "Home Video Theater," the Stadtwerkstatt TV residency (1990) of 20 Austrians "invading" Buffalo's free-speech-protected public access TV, Brenda and Glennnda's drag performances at City Hall and Niagara Falls for their 1990 *Ways in Being Gay* residency, Dennis and Kern's "Shame TV" (1994), and many outstanding residencies completed for *Open City* (1989-94). Brian Springer's initiatives around establishing live programming on cable in the late 1980's eventually broadened into a successful city-wide lobbying effort to re-establish a public access TV operator in Buffalo—BCAM [Buffalo Cable Access Media], in 1991.



From program notes for *Audience as Protagonist/Getting Into the Picture*, 1987.

Barbara Lattanzi [video curator, 1987-91]

This Video Viewing Room exhibition features videotapes that "step back" to include the audience in their frame of reference, or which foreground audience expectation and engagement as a performative, self-conscious role.

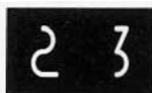
By "getting into the picture" I mean the taking on of a complex communicative interaction in which there is a sharing of power between maker and audience. The tapes in this exhibition examine this potentiality and, in a few cases, make a structural attempt to expand meaning to the authorizing attention of a roomful of people fixated on the glow of the video screen.



From program notes for *The Politics of Information*, 1988.

Barbara Lattanzi

This exhibition examines functions of knowledge in the service of power. It questions what constitutes information and how knowledge might shift in relationship to the receiver of information, who internalizes and reflects meaning back into the culture. Through what displacements does the receiver's production of meaning modify or disrupt dominant social/symbolic orders? Tapes in the exhibition range from persuasive uses of information (for advertising, public relations, and lobbying efforts) to critical analyses of assumptions and tactics of network television news and documentaries and their impact on current events.



From program notes for *The Politics and Poetics of Feminism, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom*, 1989.

Barbara Lattanzi

Program #1—Spiritual Pornographies and Material Lives:

Feminism defined as the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexist oppression raises questions with regard to film and video about strategies of representation used to further that struggle. What IS a feminist representation of political struggle? What is the relationship between political struggle and cultural definition? between political struggle and desire?

How has materialist feminism (i.e. feminism defined as struggle) been reflected in stylistic moves—of film and videomaking—especially (or inevitably?) those occurring outside of mainstream media? Is it possible to identify a materialist feminism which draws on the aesthetics of post-modernism? And in what way do style and aesthetics matter—in the sense of risking political commitment?

Program #4—Other Issues of Reproduction and Representation:

...The documentarian has become the performer—the camera, a prop—for reacting productively in a situation where everyone outside the human blockades seems helpless: clinic workers, police, women clients, counterdemonstrators, etc. [Ira] Manhoff ["Attack on Women's Clinics," 1989] documents the blockades as real social productions in which the spectator must act, in however circumscribed a way, in order to break out of the non-freedom of what seems to be the only choice: to watch the "show" or not to watch the "show." The activity of the video witness represents the formation of a certain public space of resistance (to spectatorship itself? and) to the anti-abortionists' coercive shaping of repressive social order.



From program notes for the 1990 *Video Witnesses Festival of New Journalism.* Barbara Lattanzi

Hallwalls is proud to present this unique festival, perhaps the first of its kind, which is devoted to a new genre of videomaking evolving out of the increased use by individuals and groups of low-cost consumer video equipment to record community, social, and political events...

By witnessing we are both engaged and implicated in political and social events. Video witnesses, and the audiences who attend to this public proliferation of images, contribute to rendering events visible—by defining the alternative contexts in which audiences' own shared agendas can emerge. In other words, these recorded events persist as cultural productions—"machines" geared for the renewal of our own productive capacity for change.



Poster for the first *Video Witnesses* festival, Feb. 1990.



On curatorial strategies: Unpublished discussion, March 1995. Barbara Lattanzi and Chris Hill

CH: Your program *The Politics and Poetics of Feminism, Sexuality and Reproductive Freedom* [1989] was one of the first programs at Hallwalls to foreground political subject matter. Please talk about the choices you made in framing that very comprehensive program at that time.

BL: When the Supreme Court's Webster decision came down in 1989 it galvanized the media community in Buffalo to do something. That summer the Media Coalition for Reproductive Rights [MCRF] started producing tapes for public access TV. I realized that I would be curating in the fall; I would have a forum. Hallwalls is a public space; why not use it? This crisis around reproductive rights was a deeply troubling event with such far-

reaching implications, and I felt obliged to bring whatever resources I had to bear on the issue. Being at Hallwalls gave me access to a cultural venue and a budget to rent videotapes and films.

... Although I had programmed documentary work in the past, it seemed to me that I had been naive earlier because I had ... depended on the Hallwalls context to be enough for the work to have resonance ... Instead of a core group of producers, this show could appeal to a broader audience. ...

I felt that I had to make sure that I kept my feet in both realms—in both the cultural and political. When I crafted or shaped the show I considered that work could appeal to “purely” cultural and aesthetic issues, or to a political sphere referring to the particular Supreme Court issue at hand, and/or there could be works that would appeal to both. ... If I was only interested in the politics, I would have pursued a particular type of work that was extremely didactic, and we would have known before we sat down what the message was going to be. But by also having a cultural agenda, it wasn’t going to be so certain what the message would be...

26

On cultural research and the performance of ideas: Unpublished discussion, March 1995.
Barbara Lattanzi and Chris Hill

CH: In your writing accompanying programs you curated in 1987-90, you describe video projects that are articulated both as political issues but also as performative and often public gestures. It seems that some of the local media production at that time [1989-90] represented a synthesis of those concerns. You and others formed variously focused collectives—MCRR, the 8mm News Collective, and BAARC [Buffalo Artists Against Repression & Censorship], which took up issues such as the use of public media space, and studied the construction of the local news [“News Diaries 1-4,” 1990-91]. Of course, all of this thinking about the relationship between camcorders, politics and culture predates George Holliday’s recording of Rodney King’s beating and the attention to these issues in the national press.

Could you talk more about these ideas that were circulating at that time?

BL: The *Video Witnesses* project started with a conversation over breakfast with Brian Springer where he suggested that there were a lot of people out there using these camcorders [during this time, when user-friendly camcorders had emphatically hit the U.S. market]. The first *Video Witnesses Festival* [1989] was a synthesis of two discussions—Brian’s curiosity about newshounds in other parts of the country and the notion of having some sort of festival in Buffalo. Debbie Zimmerman of Women Make Movies [visited Buffalo and] spoke about how independent film and videomakers should be entering festivals. This discussion happened at Squeaky Wheel, an organization that had recently been started by those same videomakers [who had been working in production collectives]. Why not have a festival here? ... Hallwalls had done festivals before, but the idea of organizing a festival in which people outside of Buffalo might have a specific interest would be an intriguing challenge.

27

From “Media Dialects and Stages of Access,” in *Felix*, Spring 1992.
Barbara Lattanzi and Chris Hill

BL: There have been a succession of public access live phone-in cable series in Milwaukee at MATA [Milwaukee Access TV Authority] all experimenting very adventurously with live, viewer-interactive television. These programs are not only formally and visually interesting, but are very effective at confounding the communication loop between the public-access production and the performing spectator. Even though the viewer uses the phone to participate in a particular program, there are usually some other elements that make the participation a more complex experience on a structural level (way beyond radio phone-in shows). I am thinking of a topological metaphor: a two-way communication loop twisted into a Möbius strip. ... Who’s on the outside and who’s on the inside of the production? Who is controlling the changing imagery? Who is controlling or authorizing the representational frame when the viewer’s participa-

tion is constantly pushing and destabilizing that frame?

... I would say that the 8mm News Collective in Buffalo created a production, "News Diaries," which projects the same dynamic into a real-life situation. That is, the group acts as a surrogate audience entering the real-life space of the mainstream news business. "News Diaries" documents and shares with the viewer their in-the-flesh confrontations with mainstream media. The success of the project as a video production also depends upon shared references with the viewer: the recognizable character of a local television news operation. The local news operation [WGRZ-Channel 2] became the prop for the 8mm News Collective qua TV viewers. The irony is that the local news authorizes itself to represent "the community." But if things turn around and "the community" decides to create a representation of the local news operation the result is a kind of comedic theater in which the news operators (reporters and management) are included as a cast of characters.

CH: ... "News Diaries" frames the news as a fiction-making enterprise. The news fictions invented by WGRZ, of course, ultimately construct their viewers as a market, asking them to buy their story. The 8mm News Collective, on the other hand, questions whether they as viewers can afford to buy that story.



Notes from Video Witnesses Festival 3, 1992.
Laura McGough [video curator, 1992-93]

"When the Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center in Buffalo recently mounted their annual *Video Witnesses Festival of New Journalism*—international 'activist expression, alternative perspectives and critical voices' in video—representatives from major American TV networks actually contacted the curator to see if any sensational true-life dramas might be culled from the screenings. Right style, wrong agenda."

—"Taking Liberties, the Fictionalization of Rodney King," *Fuse*, Winter 1992-93

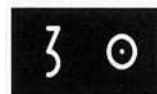
It's true: a researcher from America's Bloodiest Home Videos (a.k.a. *Eyewitness Video*) did come to the *Video*

Witnesses Festival despite my assurances that none of the entries in the festival contained footage of flooding river beds washing away houses, or vigilante neighborhood groups patrolling streets with video cameras. I did try to convince him to contact Scarlot Harlot—I thought her brand of camcorder activism would be perfect for the program—but I don't think he ever followed through. But even though he worked for a totally scummy program that attempted to co-opt video witnessing by repackaging it as entertainment for couch potatoes, he politely listened to my attempts to re-educate him on the real value of video activism and even presented me with an *Eyewitness Video* t-shirt and a note pad in the shape of a camcorder (which I still have and use).



From Buffalo Under Surveillance, an installation in the 1992 Video Witnesses Festival.
Julia Scher

Attention Girls! You have been found faking control and will now have to be punished!



From program notes for The Visual Politics of Hip Hop, 1993.
Laura McGough

"Visual hip hop" is in one sense a visual transferring of the aural mainstays of rap music—sampling, scratching, appropriation. This "look" is achieved by utilizing low-cost low-tech special effects such as shooting off monitors (or re-scanning), slowing down and speeding up footage, adding static and white noise and, in general, just "messing with the picture" and seeing what effects are gained. ... Chuck D. from Public Enemy once defined rap music as "CNN for Black people," referring to the music's ability to provide perhaps the only place where young African-Americans can find adequate representations of their culture and community. The tapes presented as part of *The Visual Politics of Hip Hop* share this sensibility.



3 1

Art Jones' trip to Canada.

Laura McGough

"When videomaker Art Jones attempted to cross the Canadian border early last year for a screening of his work at Toronto's Pleasure Dome, he was prevented from doing so. Unlike his white traveling companions, some of whom were not carrying identification, he was asked twice if he was carrying a weapon and if he had ever been arrested. Then, like many people of color, especially black males who travel across the border, he was sent to another border official for a longer series of questions. The exchange between Jones and the official was both curious and revealing. The official did not understand Jones' explanation that he was a 'hip hop artist.' 'What is hip hop?' he asked. Jones' reply failed to satisfy him. The official claimed that what Jones was describing didn't sound 'multicultural,' a qualification that would allow the official to pass Jones through the border without hesitation. The term 'multicultural' has come to mean different things to different people. For the border guard who interrogated Jones, as well as many other state and institutional personnel, it has come to mean a fairly superficial proposition, where diversity is reduced to one of a series of consumer options."

—Janet Sorenson, "Showroom Sample," *Afterimage*, May 1994

Art Jones' experience at the Canadian border was an all too (sur)real blurring of the tenuous boundaries between art and life. The irony of the Canadian customs officials' attempts to use Canada's censorship and cultural content laws to feebly mask the obvious racism of their actions was not lost on any of us detained at the "Peace" Bridge that day. The officials never bothered to view Art's videos—of course, this never stopped them from giving their "professional" assessment of the work—but if they had taken a look at, say, "The Nation Erupts," the monitor would have served as a mirror reflecting their own images back upon them.

3 3

From program notes for *Make Room for More Voices: Media Independents Speak Out on Reproductive Rights*, 1992.

Laura McGough

The question remained: How could activists, public health workers and other interested individuals be encouraged (and educated) to pick-up their camcorders, give voice to their struggle and strategically utilize video as an advocacy tool?

The Reproductive Rights residencies were designed in response to this dilemma: individuals who had little or no experience in video production and post-production were offered the opportunity to produce a videotape utilizing Hallwalls' equipment and resources. Workshops and technical support would be provided by Hallwalls' video staff and interns, but the conception and realization of each project would be entirely carried out by the residents. The tapes produced through this program—which address issues ranging from teen pregnancy to representation of the female body, and include performance, installation and documentary—represent a great deal of hard work and dedication on behalf of the makers (who learned to shoot, edit, and direct video all within one month's time).

3 4

Tariagsuk Video Center.

Laura McGough

"I am no longer human."

—"Attaguttaaluk Starvation" [1993], a Women's Video Workshop Production, Tariagsuk Video Centre, Igloolik, Nunavut Territory

I can say with complete certainty that the best thing about working at Hallwalls for me was the alliances and friendships I was able to develop with other video producers. I am particularly indebted to Hallwalls for introducing me to Marie-Helene Cousineau and the other producers at the Tariagsuk Video Centre in Igloolik. Directed by a board of Inuit members, the purpose of

the organization is to provide the residents of Igloolik with an opportunity to express their culture, language, and artistic interests through the medium of video/television and, in encouraging self-production, to counter the increasing influence of Southern television available via satellite. The work produced at Turiagsuk has had a tremendous impact on my thinking as both a curator and an artist. The videos have not only influenced my conception of what community video should/could be, but have also given me cause to re-examine my thought on the relationship between technology, community and nature. Turiagsuk videos exhibit a vision, aesthetic sensibility and a marriage of past and present that is both liberatory and empowering.

36

From "Citizen Producers in Eastern Europe, 1989-91" (reflections on tapes curated with Keiko Sei for *Eastern Europe—TV & Politics*, 1993) in *Community Media Review*, March 1994.
Chris Hill

Video news magazines produced with consumer camcorders by citizens' groups in Hungary (*Black Box*) and former Czechoslovakia (*Original Video Journal*) were part of vital underground news networks prior to government reforms in 1989-90. ... Independent work from 1989-90 not only testifies to a public's passionate desire for free speech and creation of open channels, it additionally challenged the often decades-long inability of most of the citizenry of Eastern Europe to simply access duplication technologies—printing presses, xerox machines, tape dubbing, making prints of films. When speaking to people about media and information exchange before the reforms of 1989-90, most describe gossip and samizdat—illegal printed materials and most recently illegal video—as the primary channels of opposition.

Many Americans would find life without copiers virtually inconceivable and would voice solidarity with media activists in Eastern Europe, understanding that challenging their monolithic media apparatuses would be fundamental to establishing new and democratic societies. Of course, our own self-congratulating democratic society

reflects the deadly injustices of keeping certain communities virtually invisible within mainstream media, of reducing the articulation of important issues to sound bites, and of limiting the access of a diverse spectrum of speakers to a public stage.

38

On access and production:
Unpublished discussion, March 1995.
Barbara Lattanzi and Chris Hill

BL: I think the BCAM [Buffalo public access] project came out of a hopefulness that new social relations would be defined through the accessibility of the technology. If people could have easy access they would use it. There are so many urgent issues that they would use video technology to examine them. And there is such urgent cultural work to be done, and people need models for producing their own work. It could be that the demise of the production collectives could have been partially due to a slowing recognition that it's going to take more than access to overcome this hierarchy that's been internalized around production and consumption.

CH: ... One element in this picture is the relationship formed by growing up with television. There are no models on commercial TV of non-professionals making television except for *People's Funniest Home Videos* [sic], which are about humiliation. And the model of being an active citizen in civic affairs—whether that means getting involved in schools, or lobbying City Hall, or getting to know your neighbors—has also suffered over the last 25 years. The current generation's version is particularly conservative because of Reagan and Bush, and the deterioration of public education, literacy levels ...

BL: Not everybody is going to be able or want to produce, as desirable as that might be. People can be sophisticated readers as television viewers, receivers ... but the thing is that people don't look to local people as having anything productive or worthwhile to offer on public perspectives. ... There's a huge menu of choices for people to make about what to watch but it's all at the level of consolidated global product.

4 4

On mediums and media:**Unpublished discussion, March 1995.****Barbara Lattanzi and Chris Hill**

BL: Many artists wanted to go to Niagara Falls while visiting Buffalo. What about Lily Dale [a small community of spiritualists near Buffalo, established in the 19th century, where psychic ability is recognized as an aptitude similar to musical talent or the hand-eye coordination involved in drawing] as another local attraction?

CH: I did curate a project in 1986 called *Tranceformers*, and the idea was to include a psychic as a member of a media-based ensemble—almost like a band that would play media “instruments,” who would perform frequencies and waveforms including mediumship. Later, I was chatting with Keiko Sei about Eastern Europe and other shared interests, and she told me she had once invited a group of psychics from Bulgaria to speak about mediumship at a major media festival in Germany. She said that Bulgarians recognize psychic ability as one aspect of personal performance, and consider it to be part of their national culture.

What’s interesting to me is that psychic phenomena seem to be about opening up to some kind of information that gets translated into recognizable and presumably meaningful images, which are then communicated to the client. I can’t explain the phenomenon, but my own experiences are consistent enough that I’ve gone back year after year to do “image research.” What seems clear is that every psychic has filters, which I think function like art discourses. The physical data of art is interpreted in a particular way depending on the official cultural discourse at the time, but the confidence in the specific meaning of any one image is certainly fluid over time. What’s interesting about psychics is their filters. As an example, many different psychics over the past 10 years have identified that I’m involved in the arts, but they never identify my work as “video art,” in part because it’s unlikely that they’ve ever heard of video art. So usually they say I’m a photographer or a musician or a painter. ... It’s curious—it’s a translation project. I think it’s related to translation problems that the arts face. So I think that Keiko and I would agree that we’re on to something but we haven’t figured it out yet.

4 5

Working at Hallwalls is like getting beat up in the parking lot: it stings really bad, but at least you can still see.

Julia Dzwonkoski [video curator, 1994–95]

The same person who first told me about Hallwalls also told me about photography during the Civil War—during the same conversation, in fact. How the Civil War photographers would flock to the battle scenes with their cameras; they would snap their shots and return to the city where the photographs would immediately be developed and displayed in the windows of department stores. What a concept! You could see the results of the most recent battles while you did your shopping. You might even recognize someone. The glass negatives used in these photographs were eventually recycled into the lenses of the goggles worn by pilots fighting in the First World War, so the pilots were seeing one war through another—or so I was told. Then I was told about Hallwalls: how you could go there and watch the Super Bowl on a big screen in the place called “the Vault” and drink beer with lesbians.

A few weeks later I moved to Buffalo. Now I live here every day. These days you don’t see many department stores. They’ve mostly been turned into malls, like factories have been turned into contemporary art centers. And rarely do you find battle photos in the windows of malls, because the malls were built without windows and today’s wars are built for television. It’s no wonder everyone is confused. I’m confused. What I want to know is, whose birthday is it, anyway? I mean, who gets to blow out the candles?

4 6

Fire dream, part two.**Chris Hill**

Back to that dream about the fire in the gallery and the boxes filled with pictures, phone numbers and notes that the curators have written to themselves. What can I save from the fire? In my dream of the blaze, I save a deck of cards for you out of one of those boxes.

It may not be a full deck. And you'll have to read the cards through your own cultural filters, which expand and contract under pressure and in severe weather. But here's the card that represents the joker, who would be called the mature trickster in some decks, whose challenging ideas are the source of her/his stamina to establish a cultural scene wherever s/he happens to reside. And I've saved the devil, another provocative artist who may be young and insulting, but knows what questions to ask about making and performing art now and sharing inevitably scarce resources. And I've saved the death card; even though encounters with these characters are exhausting, they're necessary to rehearse your immune system, to prepare you for the ongoing battles over the value of creating culture in America. And I've saved the queen/king, a nurturer who is invested, for whatever reasons, in welcoming new growth, for chewing up and spitting out the homemade pabulum which will combat the vitamin deficiencies of the dyslexic and allergy-prone children of the coming generation. And here's the high priest/ess, an artist whose forte is creating tools for all emergencies and occasions—armatures that can be used to prop up new organizational structures, can drive vehicles to engage the attention of new and/or venerable audiences, and which can access and assess evolving media configurations problematizing audiences', producers' and curators' experiences of public/private, centered/marginal, urban/suburban, virtual/material, image/sound/voice/text.

My reading is that the fire of the dream is a local blaze born of frustration with real differences of opinion around how an arts community can survive the next 5 years. Out of those boxes which will perish in the dream I've saved this deck of cards for you. Play them how you will. The vitality of your future local culture lies in the mutually attentive and performative energies of a tribe—or a dysfunctional family.

FILM

STEPHEN GALLAGHER

Excerpt from "The State of Upstate,"
annual report on upstate New York
media programming in *The Squealer*, April
1988

Since I began to curate Hallwalls' film program in 1984 I have sought to broaden both the range of film styles, concerns, and issues represented, as well as to reach a larger constituency than simply the "art world."... The limited scope of the program was entirely symptomatic of the "alternative" film scene at the time: largely white, male, self-serving and "visionary." This was certainly the demographic composition of the staff at SUNYAB's Center for Media Studies—where the majority of Buffalo's active film and video community have spent some time—and for the most part still is. I was certainly attracted to the staff at this particular department, and did find many interesting interventions in the modernist mire I've implicated them (and myself) in—particularly in the courses of the ever generous and inspiring Tony Conrad.

...Right now I'm organizing a festival of "gay" and "lesbian" films and preparing to publish a book on black British cinema, and organizing a tour of New Latin American cinema. ...I'm programming to fill a gap—in representation and in Buffalo—but I also program to educate myself ...

A more detailed account of Gallagher's years as film programmer, and his take on the direction of the program under previous curators including Barbara Lattanzi, may be found in his memoir of "The Wonder Years" elsewhere in this volume.

Here is a description:

'Lizzie Borden is a film-maker and an art writer whose writings have appeared in *Artforum*, various catalogues, and *The Fox*. Her film, "Regrouping", is a semi-documentary, semi-fictional feature about the dialectic between individual and group.'

Friday, October 15, 8:30 p.m.
Discussion to follow film

HALLWALLS
30 Essex St. Buffalo, N.Y. (716)884-
HALLWALLS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Lizzie Borden film screening, Oct. 15, 1976.

KEITH SANBORN

Excerpt from letter to the editor responding to
Gallagher, published in June 1988 *Squealer*

...While Steve is accurate in characterizing the history of programming at Hallwalls as largely representing the interests of a white audience—and he is entirely justified in making this criticism—the film programming at Hallwalls has never been primarily devoted to either male or Sitneyan visionary film. During the time I lived in Buffalo from 1978 to 1981 ... Hallwalls consistently presented the work which fell through the cracks in the Visionary Edifice promoted by Media Study Buffalo and the Albright Knox. Even before they were promoted by Hoberman into ephemeral stardom, the films of Scott and Beth B., Eric Mitchell, James Nares, Vivian Dick and many others of the '70s neo-underground were shown at Hallwalls long before they were considered acceptable subjects of conversations at Media Study/Buffalo or in *October*; the first screenings of all the films of Ericka Beckman in Buffalo have taken place at Hallwalls. The first screening of Richard Serra and Clara Weyergraf's *Stahlwerk* in Buffalo took place at Hallwalls. And the Hallwalls Jack Goldstein [exhibition] was in fact the occasion for the screening of Jack's films [several years before Media Study showed them, by which point] they had been officially canonized and declawed by the *Village Voice*.

... While it is apposite to evoke the interests of Longo, Zwack, Clough and Sherman in placing in perspective the film program at Hallwalls, the fact is, their work is white, mostly male, and in any case targeted at a bourgeois high culture audience dominated by the omnivorous mentality of political and economic advertising. These artists simply had the realpolitik sense to accept this as given, and to make it the basis for aestheticized and nostalgic posturing in the Reagan age.

...While I value all the friendships that I made at the Center for Media Study, I take special pleasure in saying that Tony Conrad was for me, as he was for you [Gallagher], a particular bright spot in the often dreary environment of the self-imposed ghetto of film formalism. We should not fail to note, however, that the O'Grady Media Empire in Buffalo was actually much less uniform in its treatment of film than the Chicago Art Institute or the Collective for Living Cinema in New York, for example. At least in Buffalo, due largely to the efforts of that Empire and of James Blue in particular, documentaries and various regional voices in film and video were given time on public television and on the proscenium screen alongside and often in place of the pantheon.

STEPHEN GALLAGHER

Excerpt from "Paul Sharits 1943-1993."

The Squealer, Winter 1993

I met Paul very soon after arriving in Buffalo. He showed up very late for his first class and spent the remainder of the period flipping absent-mindedly through the pages of Freud's *On Dreams*, searching for passages he had marked but could no longer locate. I was bewildered and amused; he was not the scientifically morose professor I had imagined, but he was charming and often made casual remarks of amazing insight.

... Paul Sharits was both the "structuralist" filmmaker invented and supported by critics and a romantic very much at odds with the establishment. Although he did plot out his color "flicker films" very precisely, he could also be found in his studio reviewing potential film loops late at night as he toked on a joint. Paul would sit very close to

the screen and stare intensely at the vibrating colors, exclaiming loudly, "Yeah!" when a particular loop evinced a strong psychedelic effect.

... Paul opened himself to new experiences with the enthusiasm of a young child. He loved Beethoven and the Butthole Surfers; Stanley Kubrick and second-rate gore films; Gauguin and Basquiat; Borgès and Anne Rice. He read voraciously, loved with great passion, and tested the patience of just about everyone who ever knew him.

... Paul Sharits charted an emotional terrain of great, if often disturbing beauty. His life, as he saw it, was an emotional vortex swirling around a great void, as in some romantic painting, or gothic horror film. His secret desire was to produce a film about vampires.



Composite photo from "The Hallwalls Gallery Publication," Sept. 1975. L-R: Michael Snow, Paul Sharits, "Hal Walls" (Jack Griffiths), Joe Hryvniak, Jeff Catalano, Hollis Frampton, Peter Gadol.

KEITH SANBORN

Excerpts from essays in *Super-8/Berlin: The architecture of division, 1983*

THE SUPER-8 QUESTION

... In the past five years in America, many of the significant departures from the tracks of the formal film of the '60s and '70s have come about in Super-8 ... both in spite of, and because of, the establishment of the network of regional media centers in this country. Super-8 is light, portable, relatively cheap; you can own your own camera, projector, and editing equipment without a bank loan, or a relative leaving you money in a will. You don't have to rely on what you can borrow from your local media center for a day or two. Super-8 is a format many can and do live with.

I had heard there was a great deal of activity in Germany in Super-8 and I had seen a few of the films, in Buffalo and New York. I had heard stories about more, and above all about Berlin, the paradoxical center of German culture. I wanted to find out about the impact of Super-8 in Germany and about the sensibility of the current generation there. For Germany, at least in our current mythology, is our nearest cultural double.

... In late March of this year, I traveled to Berlin: to meet certain people, to show my films and perform, and to find out about Super-8 in Berlin, to gather films for this show. ... Through [filmmaker Yane Fehrenberg] and others I knew that the Arsenal Kino was a center of independent film activity in Berlin. ... [Its then-director, the late Alf Bold] possesses an acute historical sense and keeps himself well-informed about current work on the edge of the edge of established film activity. He seems to know everyone and be everywhere at once. Herr Bold furnished me with a number of additional names and addresses of Super-8 filmmakers in Berlin, and again, they put me in contact with others.

... When I could get an answer to [my questions about why so many artists chose to work in this medium], it was nearly always the same: Super-8 was the only thing they could get their hands on—the only thing they could afford. ... They stick to Super-8, for one thing, because many of the films are used in multi-media performances in clubs and cafés, so there is no particular fetishizing of "image quality," while it does remain important that equipment be portable and easy to handle. Super-8 crosses cities and national borders infinitely more easily than 16. For another, there is a reasonably good distribution network in the form of Kinos in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany which show Super-8 alone, or alongside 16 and 35.

I'M LOOKING OVER THE WALL
AND THEY'RE LOOKING AT ME

Berlin is a walled city, an inverted fortress—a city walled in. It lies at the crossroads: spiritually and geographically equidistant from East and West. ... In Berlin, with a twist of a TV dial or a trip across town, you move from West to East and back; with the qualification that you must have started in the West to make the physical trip over and back without risking your life.

Along the wall in West Berlin there are observation platforms not unlike the ones at Niagara Falls, which allow a tourist glimpse into the East. What you see is a zone of concrete, barbed wire, steel defenses, towers full of soldiers with binoculars watching you watch them.

... In Berlin, the double city, everything is halved and doubled—multiplied through division. In the contests with prizes and in deadly conflicts, East and West stand locked in a frozen stare, each the mirror image of the other. Each contemplates the spectacle of the other society; each remains oblivious that it is the society of the spectacle.

... And what of the present generation [of artists]? We have begun to catch a glimpse of it in the work of the "Neo-Expressionist" painters, *die junge Wilde*, several of whom have made Super-8 films themselves. In the Super-8 films of Berlin, we begin to see the outlines of a new sensibility take shape in film. One that functions apart from the New German Film Industry and largely apart even from the museum and festival structure which emerged to support both the "New" features and the formalist avant-garde.

The work in Super-8 began in the street, in lofts, in studios. It quickly moved not to museums, but to cafés, music clubs, and small independent Kinos (movie theaters). The work in this show is the product ... of a generation acculturated through TV and rock music. The only film-historical reference points I could extract from any of the filmmakers I spoke with was the work of Abel Gance and Fernand Léger. With one or two exceptions, the filmmakers in the show claimed to be entirely ignorant of the formal film of the '60s and '70s, either as it developed in Germany or abroad. For the saints of the "New German Cinema" I heard only disdain. But Berlin is a city of Kinos, and in a given month you can see anything from Eisenstein to Pasolini and current independent work from Hamburg to Pittsburgh.

Sanborn's writing appeared in a catalogue accompanying a touring film exhibition he curated in 1983, which included works by Christoph Doering, Die tödliche Doris, Antje Fels, Monika Funke Stern, and others.



YOUNG, BRITISH
& BLACK



COCO FUSCO

Excerpts from "An Interview with Martina Attille and Isaac Julien of Sankofa," in *Young, British, and Black: A monograph on the work of Sankofa Film/Video Collective*, 1988

MARTINA ATTILLE: The legacy of the sixties is important. The Black movement has a particular style which historically has been male dominated. ... Although the fist was a crucially important rallying symbol, we must look behind the sign to see what it stands for.

ISAAC JULIEN: It has to stand for much more now. Its agenda has to broaden. Other men have found the Black fist to be something that doesn't include them. Nor did the symbol originally include questions of sexuality and gender. ...

MA: We're not just making films to entertain, to get people to relax. We're trying to make some intervention, or take up and respond to our environment. If we sit down as three Black women and a Black man, whose parents come from the West Indies, or whatever, we do so with certain cultural and political positions and priorities. ...

COCO FUSCO: Can we discuss the way in which the legacy of Black American radicalism from the '60s and '70s informed the film [*The Passion of Remembrance*, 1986]? What is your relationship to this? Why turn to it, as opposed to, let's say, African nationalist revolutionary texts from the '50s and '60s? Obviously, we're not talking about a film history informing your films, we're talking about a political history and a written history informing your films.

IJ: There was a Black Power movement in Britain that borrowed many of its signs and symbols from America. We do borrow from other cultures within the diaspora, but we are specifically talking about a Black British experience—and we have to be very careful not to substitute an American experience for a Black British experience. ...

CF: ... Much of the criticism concerning your work claims that the arguments are Black and the film style is Euro-American, i.e. white avant-garde. I don't believe that that is really the issue, nor is it the way that your approach need be characterized. What are the dynamics that you seek to evoke on a visual plane?

IJ: The white avant-garde can't help but try to seize upon *Passion* and claim it as borrowing from The Grammar, from their film grammars. I've never seen many of these films. I've never seen, for example, [Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey's film] *Riddles of the Sphinx*. As much as I like Laura Mulvey and her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which is very important, her pleasure is not the same as the kind of pleasure that we're talking about and articulating. There's a difference. And I think that, in a sense, when you talk about the avant-garde as it were, it's very easy to compare the way *Passion* is made with white avant-garde filmmakers. That's not to say there aren't influences. There are some avant-garde filmmakers, such as Ken McMullen and Sally Potter, whose work I am interested in. But if I were going to cite direct influences, I would look to Haile Gerima and Charles Burnett.

MA: And Med Hondo's work.

IJ: There is still to be developed a vocabulary of Black film criticism that can start to talk about our work.

Fusco's monograph accompanied a touring film series, also entitled "Young, British, & Black," presenting the work of the two film collectives. Both the publication and the series were organized by Stephen Gallagher.

ARIEL DORFMAN

Excerpt from "Beyond Satan and A Siesta:
A Preface," in *Reviewing Histories: Selections from
New Latin American Cinema*,
edited by Coco Fusco, 1987

When people in Latin America think about life in the United States, the images conjured up primarily derive from what the U.S. media itself has projected on incessantly accessible screens—films at the movie theaters, TV serials, and news on television at home.

If there were symmetry and fairness in the distribution of images world-wide, we might expect, therefore, that people in the United States would have explored Latin America through the experience that artists and media producers south of the Rio Grande have been creating with enormous difficulties during this century. This has not, unfortunately, been the case. The contact most people in this country have with Latin America is constructed with second-hand, twice-removed, overly-digested visions, most of them engendered in the United States.

... [This publication] is a chance to eavesdrop on

[Latin American] filmmakers as they struggle to come to terms with the problems of portraying misdeveloped societies with the technological instruments and genres imported from abroad. The spectator can now become a reader, watching the process whereby these films were created—not fundamentally in order to explain our own ideas to a world that did not seem to care, but as one more attempt to reconquer a reality which, complex and tyrannically hidden as it was, had remained outside discovery, at least in the popular media. The construction of these films, therefore, has been accompanied by constant debate, furious thought, whirlwind dialogue among the filmmakers themselves, whose search for the right images and the way to communicate them had to begin by self-questioning, the breaking down of the walls of their own mental captivity.

You are invited to participate.

COCO FUSCO

Excerpt from "Reviewing Histories: An
Introduction," in *Reviewing Histories*, 1987

It is in defiance of current attempts to erase the presence of resistance to state power that the program's contemporary documentaries situate themselves. Reviving notions of "imperfect cinema" in terms of their need to intervene in national and international media, these films, like the movements they represent, function as an ongoing symbolic protest against the state's power of effacement, from its negation of participatory politics and civil liberties to its own version of terrorism: disappearance. As urgent as their tone might seem, these documentaries are the result of prescient, long-term strategies. And, as many of the interviews indicate, the terms have shifted since the sixties. They are less apocalyptic, speak less of decolonization and filmic artilleries and more about the ongoing project of preserving popular memory, building image archives for present and future use. The films are styled to formats that insure greater access, but they continue to offer pointed critiques of western notions of objectivity.

Reviewing Histories contained new and reprinted material by Glauber Rocha, Richard Peña, Jean-Luc Godard, Fernando Solanas, Raúl Ruiz, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, and others; the accompanying traveling film series included works by Rocha, Solanas, Ruiz, Alea, Paul Leduc, Sara Gómez, Susana Muñoz, and Lourdes Portillo, among others.

ANDREAS WILDFANG

Excerpt from "Berlin / Images in Progress (The Grant Proposal Cut Up)," in *Berlin / Images in Progress: Contemporary Berlin Filmmaking, 1989*

Super realism—Super-8—is the unofficial story of privacy. Home movies require permission, a PG reality. A capturing apparatus for home-hunting purposes. ... The machine inherits the values of time and space. The commercial value of Super-8: \$5 can buy you 15 feet and three minutes of film. The upper class zoom lens. Stay distant and compressed. Come closer and get muddy hands. Get too close and reality becomes a blurry something. One of many aspects of Berlin filmmaking: To get close but keep things in focus.

The project *Berlin / Images in Progress* focuses on specific aspects of Berlin's culture in the field of independent filmmaking. "Berliner" means pancake and art is the art of eating. You can't eat the cake and keep it. Stay hungry and simulate. Berlin is as close as you can get.

... A Super-8 camera is a wand you can buy in the toy department. Filmmakers have lost the user's instructions. So they read the city.

Berlin/Images in Progress, the book and accompanying touring film series organized by Brünig and Wildfang when the two were co-curators at Hallwalls, focused on the work of Michael Brynntrup, Penelope Buitenhuis, Michael Krause and Katarina Peters.

Leipzig, November 20th, 1994

JÜRGEN BRÜNING

Which Buffalo? (A fax from a pale pal)

Dear Ron,

Being handed your fax in Ljubljana from Steve Gallagher in which you asked me to contribute to a book portraying in different viewpoints the history of Hallwalls reached me in a time traveling a lot. Your fax and the letter of yours I found back home in Berlin just on my way to Leipzig brought back my memories of my time I spent in Buffalo. My wish to start writing immediately remained a wish because before leaving for the Leipzig Documentary Filmfestival the next day I still had to organize my departure. Other things came up to my mind knowing that Jennie Livingston would attend Leipzig as a member of the Festival jury. This brought my memory to an incident which happened while I was working in Buffalo. Scouting for new work I saw Jennie Livingston's new film *PARIS IS BURNING* in San Francisco and I asked her if I could show the film in Buffalo. It was one of the first screenings of the film and it hadn't hit big then. Jennie turned around and asked, which Buffalo. The reader has to know in conflict to my wishes and hard tries I always kept my German accent and Jennie maybe assumed there is a Buffalo in Germany. In correction to this assumption, I told her I meant Buffalo, New York and she said no and quickly turned away. I felt rejected, disappointed. Disappointed that she didn't want to show her film at Hallwalls, the best place to show your film! (I have to say, meanwhile I had other experiences with her and in Leipzig we had a great time searching for lesbian and gay bars.)

Hallwalls had become soon after I started working there a place where I could experiment with my ideas and had all the support by excellent co-curators, listening to all the things I would like to do. I think they were worn out after I left because what I heard is that my successor had a more difficult time to get their attention.

I felt comfortable and soon I had a lot of friends, which has more importance to me than the evaluation of Hallwalls' significance in the "postmodern" art world. Anyway, I liked the Maid of the Mist and did it 25 times. Each visiting filmmaker wanted to do it or had to do it. And if you ever come to Buffalo, go see the newest in Art Entertainment at Hallwalls, 2495 Main Street, and don't miss the Niagara Falls.

Ron, I hope this is somehow what you had in mind. The best I could do. Hope you are well. Keep me informed. Big hug.

Jürgen

JONATHAN POLLARD

Program notes for "Queasy Stomachs, Tender Groins: A Survey of the Grand Secret Society of Sex," 1989

queasy stomachs tender groins is an equal opportunity voyeur...all sex bents are presented here on an equal footing...it's a wide survey of film and video images from sex culture...this approach is like dissection...the individual pieces (many excerpts) are not so important...they are used to build a larger map...this approach is probably quite un-erotic...the point is the map is of sex culture not just sex...sex culture is a hidden, illegitimate culture...eccentric, obsessive and subversive behaviour flourish in the freedom of its ill repute...sex images are crudely made and distrib-

uted...they move person to person through an underground economy...they are taboo images...they derive power from this extreme status...images of biology and desire become supernatural...in isolation these images have built their own variations on film/video language...specific genres and conventions...sometimes even coded double meanings...the physiques... 'nudist' exploitation... sex is sex, but it is also a secret society of sex.

Queasy Stomachs, Tender Groins, a joint presentation of Hallwalls and Toronto's A Space and the Purple Institution, was guest-curated by Jonathan Pollard at the suggestion of Jürgen Brünig; a limited-edition zine accompanied the series, which included works by Gwendolyn, Scarlet Harlot, Betty Dodson, Annie Sprinkle, Fred Halsted, Kathy Daymond & Shannon Bell, Al Lirog, Blush Productions, Lothar Lambert, and others.

RENÉ BROUSSARD

Excerpts from a phone interview with
Elizabeth Licata, August 28, 1995

My situation was kind of interesting; I wasn't looking for a job at all. I had heard of Hallwalls, obviously, and I had spoken to Jürgen Brüning on a couple of occasions trying to track down films for my theater down here [in New Orleans], Zeitgeist Theatre Experiments, including one he had a cameo in called "Children of the Confetti-Machine." I was doing a series called "The World Made Flesh: American Experiments in Marginality," and Julie Zando was one of the video artists I brought down. She was in New Orleans the same weekend as Leslie Thornton and she was impressed with what I had been able to accomplish without any real grant funding, just sort of doing, and she told me that Hallwalls had been looking for a film curator and that they were close to making a decision.

... [Accepting the curatorial position at Hallwalls and moving to Buffalo] was really the scariest thing I've ever had to do or face; getting on the plane I was literally physically ill, and I never get airsick. But here I was throwing up, thinking I'm doing the wrong thing, I'm going to this city where I don't even know a single person. But it was great when I got there. There was this big barbecue at Julie's and I met just about everybody. [Members of the Austrian media/performance collective] Stadtwerkstatt were there doing their big live show and I got to be on it my first night in Buffalo. Paul Sharits had his shirt off and was showing his scars...

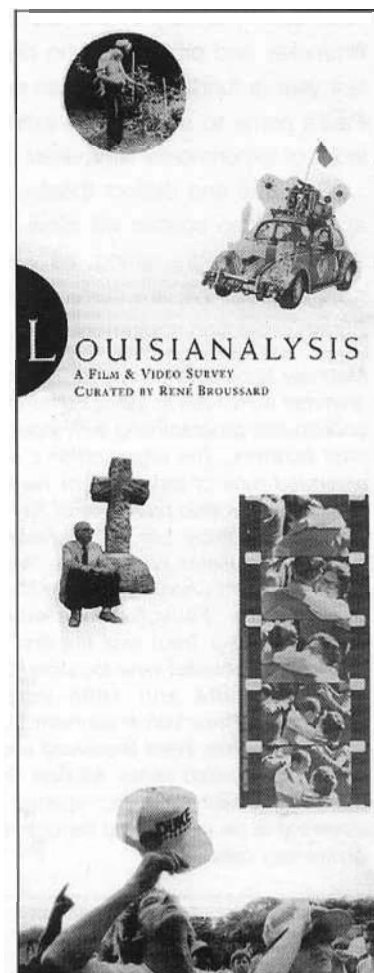
It was difficult at first. The 1990 "Ways in Being Gay" Festival was such an incredible experience for me—the people I got to meet and work with—but I hadn't had an opportunity to implement any of my own programming yet. It would have been really easy for me to just say, well, this isn't working the way I thought it would, so I'm gonna leave and go back to New Orleans and do my own thing. But it became a need to prove myself.

The first program that was absolutely mine was the *Mondo Manitoba Marathon*. I brought Guy Maddin and George Toles here. I definitely exploited the Toles connection [George's brother Tom Toles is the syndicated *Buffalo News* political cartoonist] to get people to see what are really remarkable films and really challenging work. That was very successful programming, and not just because of the numbers and the money.

I never really got Jürgen's stuff out of the way, nor did I want to. I was in constant contact with him. I got invited to Germany twice as a result of the network that Jürgen started and met filmmakers and curators who came to Hallwalls from the initial contacts he made. I [established and] toured the Hallwalls Western New York film tour throughout Europe and then I got invited back to the Cologne film festival to present another program which was also at the Homo Lulu Festival in Berlin. I definitely think that I brought sheer volume and intensity to the Hallwalls film program; I don't know if it's still there.



Craig Baldwin screenings, Nov. 2-3, 1992.



Louisianalysis catalogue, Dec. 1992

MATTHEW ISAAC SCHWONKE

Excerpt from "The State of Upstate,"
annual report on upstate New York media
programming in *The Squealer*, 1995

The most significant change at Hallwalls this past year is the January 1994 move from 700 Main Street, Hallwalls' location since 1980, to the fourth floor of the Tri-Main Center at 2495 Main Street. When completed, the new location will have a larger gallery space, a performance theater, a cinema space for film and video, a video editing suite, a video viewing room [designed by Vito Acconci], and a café area. The film/video space has been named the Paul Sharits Film and Video Theater, in memory of the late experimental filmmaker and professor, who died in Buffalo last year (a fund has also been established in Paul's name to support the exhibition of the work of experimental filmmakers at Hallwalls). ... Separate and distinct theater/performance and film/video spaces will allow for more film and video programming, as well as longer runs of films. We are currently searching for 35mm projection equipment.

Matthew Schwonke served as Hallwalls' film programmer from 1994 to 1995; Edmund Cardoni now coordinates programming with input from several past curators. The organization's new focus on extended runs of independent feature films has included the Buffalo premieres of Ray Müller's "The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl," Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick's "Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media," and Jan Svankmajer's "Faust," among others. German director Monika Treut was the first filmmaker to appear in Hallwalls' new location. Other visiting artists in 1994 and 1995 included D. A. Pennebaker, Rosa Von Praunheim, Rick Prelinger, and Lynne Fernie; René Broussard and Gail Mentlik both guest-curated series. Michael Snow, the first filmmaker to visit Hallwalls, returned to present a screening of his work during the organization's 20th Anniversary celebration.

JOHN S. HALL
"Four Films," 1992

Spoken word performer John S. Hall (best known for his recordings with the band King Missile) came to Buffalo in February 1992 for a solo performance at Hallwalls. The night before his show, he attended a screening of the Western New York Film Tour, organized by René Broussard and featuring works by Steve Bartoo, Terry Klein, Todd Bellanca, Henry Jesionka, Lawrence F. Brose, and Pia Cseri-Briones. Midway through the evening, he began writing a new piece, which he read the following night.

1

...But when the film came back from the lab, it was completely black, and I was bummed for about a week, until I got the idea for *The Black Film*. I was certain it had been done before, but then again, so had *Beau Geste*.

So I decided to screen *The Black Film*, with a polemical soundtrack about civil rights and the plague. As the '90s unfold, I find myself becoming more and more motivated to express myself politically. This made me a lot more boring at dinner parties, but the issues were becoming increasingly urgent. *The Black Film* was an outlet.

2

The Black Film was an outlet. *The White Film* was an inlet. I poured myself into it and found myself inside it. Like the film I, too, was white (still am). To assert my whiteness became a political act that I was to become increasingly uncomfortable with. The tension, therefore, was not just between the Black and White films but also between the male, heterosexual, white filmmaker and the genderless, asexual White Film. These and other, lesser tensions were to become the focuses of the twin films.

3

This was all well and good, but unresolved tension is not unlike unrequited love. *The Gray Film* would have resolved any differences revealed or generated by the two earlier works. This ambition, however, was not realized. *The Gray Film*, as it developed, came to be about failure. Nevertheless, it was an enormous success, although I can't for the life of me say why.

4

A fourth film was needed.

A fourth film was necessary.

I had read a lot of Jung, and had become convinced that 3 was unbalanced and that 4, the number of authority and order, needed to be enumerated. But choosing a color proved to be impossible. I tried them all—none worked. The project had to be a tetralogy, yet there were only three films. This problem was never resolved.

LITERATURE

R.D. POHL

From Hallwalls' very inception, there was an interest in exploring the narrative possibilities of all contemporary art forms in what eventually would be recognized as a postmodern context. One need only look at some of Robert Longo's best known work dating back to that period—contorted figures of stylish young white men and women dressed in black and seemingly caught while dancing before a strobe light's flash or arrested by the jolt of some unseen electrical mishap—or Cindy Sherman's celebrated "Untitled Film Stills" to understand that they derived their significance either from or in opposition to other recognizable popular narratives or received cultural subtexts.

The media-savvy nature of much of the work sponsored by or exhibited at Hallwalls led to a broadly-based interest in narrative art of all sorts. Accordingly, readings were always an important part of the mix of events even in Hallwalls' Essex Street incarnation. While the audience for these early events comprised primarily visual artists, filmmakers, and multi-media artists, the focus of their concern was usually on the narrative strategies whereby writers (or "literary artists" as they were sometimes exotically referred to) constructed and/or deconstructed their work.

The first regular series of readings in Hallwalls' Essex Street days was called "Writeratio," organized by George Howell, and is said to have evolved from an ongoing writers' workshop that was actually sponsored by CEPA, Hallwalls' former longtime cohabitant in both the Essex and Main Street complexes. The first archival references to Writeratio readings date back to 1976, with the program becoming more firmly established by 1977-78.

One key person who came on the scene at that time and had a major influence on Hallwalls' subsequent programmatic development was Anne Turyn. A talented writer, editor, and visual artist, Turyn brought experimental writing—particularly that branch of contemporary urban literary innovation which shared much in common with the non-linear, postmodern narrative techniques of performance art—into the wide range of influences that were shaping the evolution of Hallwalls.

Under Turyn's curatorship, the program at Hallwalls developed a focus on contemporary fiction which was unique among community-based literary programs in Western New York at the time. She renamed the readings series, dubbing it "Fiction Diction," an ingenious rhyme that raised the profile of the program in the community while stressing what was essential about it: namely, that it was a series of literary "events" or "performances" aesthetically anchored by the author's voice as opposed to the characteristically stuffy and intentionally prosaic recitation of a culturally inert literary text.



Robert Creeley reading, circa 1975.

Audio-Visual Aids Blend Poetry, Pictures

By SUSAN CLARK
"The best way to appreciate a good poet is to hear him," says George Howell, who directs a unique poetry program at Hallwalls Gallery. The title, "Writeratio," signifies Howell's fascination with the "ratio" between writing and the other arts—especially visual ones. "I don't want it to seem like an exclusive club," says Howell of the monthly Sunday meetings in Hallwalls' 30 Essex St. gallery space. "But there's a certain amount of distrust between people who write and people who are visual artists, and I want to create a situation where they can mix."

Howell is experimenting with audio and videotapes and an overhead projector to amplify the works of such writers as Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Vito Acconci and Gary Snyder.

FEBRUARY FIRST'S program will branch out to include composer-writer John Cage.

"I'm taking a poem that's normally flat on a page and putting it in a room. Verbal structures are presented visually," says Howell. "I'm taking a form: A poem and a man reading a poem so they fill up a space and make a situation." A writer who was graduated from Buffalo State University College with a BA in English in 1972, Howell, 27, joined the group of artists who work at Hallwalls last September and began "Writeratio" in October. The meetings he began will continue through May on the first Sunday of each month at 3:00 PM.

THE GALLERY setting is no happenstance. Although Hallwalls is seen as a place for visual artists, the main thing going on there, according to Howell, is communications among artists and with the public.

January's communication was a departure from the usual program. Last week Howell presented his own "prose sketch," a video installation which literally closed in on the acts of both reading and writing.

The audience was ushered into a curtained-off cubicle lined with chairs facing a small television monitor. The half-hour tape alternated between a close-in view of typewriter keys striking the page and a full-page view of sections of Howell's four-page work.

FROM A speaker mounted above and behind the audience came the sound of typing, intentionally unsynchronized with the visual.

The installation was an experiment based on Howell's visualizing with "Writeratio" and on two other artists' works which impressed him:

Conceptual artist Willem de Kooning's video encampment at Hallwalls in February of last year, and Yvonne Rainer's film, "Lives of Performers," which made good use of the typewritten page. It was shown last month at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS

Tuesday, January 13, 1976

ANDREW COE:

from "The Magazine as Minimalist,"

San Francisco Examiner

February 10, 1987

It sounds like a magazine from the '30s. And through simple persistence it has become the senior downtown New York fiction magazine. *Top Stories* magazine was started in 1978 by Anne Turyn, a Buffalo photographer-artist. She took over the reading series at a local performance space and through it met writers and performers, like Laurie Anderson, from whom she solicited manuscripts. The *Top Stories* format became one writer per issue; and the production was done as cheaply as possible. The first issue sat in stacks in Anne Turyn's home.

"I didn't know what to do with it next," said Turyn. "And I was too shy to bring it to bookstores."

She soon moved to New York, and a couple of trends in the magazine became conscious. "Around issue No. 6 or No. 7 I noticed that we had included only women writers," she said. "So I decided to go with it for a while. Since then, men have crept in as collaborators, and the latest double issue has two stories by men."

Another trend has been that the writers are drawn from the art world, i.e., their audience and friends are artists. In addition to Laurie Anderson, Kathy Acker and Constance DeJong are good examples of these writers. According to Turyn, they have a different attitude toward writing: Language is more like an artistic medium. Turyn herself was most interested in language in a formal sense when she started *Top Stories*, but since then she has turned back to story and narrative. However, this doesn't mean she's going to be printing Harold Robbins.

"I want to know: What is a minimal story?" she said. "What is the least you can have and still have a story? What is the least amount of images?"



Photo: Ed Sobala

Turyn also initiated a series of monographs called *Top Stories* which featured short works by many of the writer/performers who had done Fiction Diction readings. The format of these Hallwalls-sponsored publications anticipated the low-overhead, alternative approach of many of the so-called "zines" that have bubbled up from the literary underground over the past decade.

When Turyn moved to New York City in 1979, Donna Wyszomierski assumed the curatorship of Fiction Diction. A fine writer and artist with a strikingly effective deadpan minimalist prose style, Wyszomierski initiated the long and fruitful relationship between Hallwalls and many of the experimental writers associated with the Fiction Collective, founded in the same year as Hallwalls. With the loyal support and helpful advice of former Hallwalls Board member Ray Federman—one of the central figures in the evolution of innovative fiction in America over the past quarter century—Wyszomierski was able to bring such major figures as Robert Coover, Ron Sukenick, George Chambers, Steve Katz, and Spalding Gray to read in Buffalo.

I began attending Fiction Diction readings and other Hallwalls events (initially at the suggestion of Ray Federman, who was then one of my mentors at the University at Buffalo) around the time of the organization's move from the Essex Street complex to the fourth floor of 700 Main Street in the Fall of 1980. In May of 1981, I did a Fiction Diction reading with my friend Anne Pluto—a wonderful writer who was then also a Ph.D. candidate at UB and is now associate professor of English at Lesley College in Massachusetts. After the reading, Donna Wyszomierski approached us and asked whether we knew of anyone who might be interested in coordinating the series for the next season.

I looked at Annie and she looked at me. Two evenings later we were meeting with Hallwalls Director Bill Currie and making plans for the Fall series of readings. Thanks to a remarkable streak of good fortune, the sound advice of the late Gregory Kolovakos (Director of the Literature program of the New York State Council on the Arts), an unprecedented level of organizational support from the National Endowment for the Arts, and an enthusiastic response from the community, our hard work effected a startling transformation in the visibility of both Hallwalls and Fiction Diction on the area cultural scene.

From the outset, Annie and I were intent on incorporating a wide range of the voices and influences on the serious American fiction being written in the early 1980s. Typically, we would pair emerging Western New York-based writers or lesser-known writers from elsewhere in readings with writers who had already established a reputation for their work and were likely to draw a sizable audience. Even factors as seemingly insignificant as the deregulation of the U.S. airline industry and the ensuing price wars contributed to the low overhead of our programming, allowing it to become truly national in scope.

During the course of the two years that we programmed Fiction Diction, we were able to present twenty-four readings featuring forty leading writers. Just a partial listing of the writers we were able to bring to Hallwalls audiences would include a veritable pantheon of postmodern American fiction: Walter Abish, T. Coraghassan Boyle, the late Richard Brautigan, Jonathan Baumbach, the late Raymond Carver, Samuel R. Delany, Grace Paley, Jayne

Anne Phillips, Alice Walker, Kate Wheeler, Robley Wilson, and William S. Wilson, as well as Western New York-based luminaries Raymond Federman and Leslie Fiedler.

Anne Pluto moved to the Boston area following the 1983 season and I took advantage of some other opportunities that were offered to me as a writer. Fortunately, we were able to place the Fiction Diction program in the very capable hands of Nancy Peskin, a writer who had at one time served as Hallwalls' Administrative Assistant. During the 1983-84 season of programming, Nancy returned the program to its original focus and was able to present a challenging and entertaining series of readings that featured such writers as Gary Indiana, Cookie Mueller, and, perhaps most memorably, the late artist/writer David Wojnarowicz.

Following Anne Turyn's decision to self-publish *Top Stories*, Peskin also took on the project of producing an anthology of new fiction comprising work solicited from writers who had appeared in the reading series. The soft-cover anthology entitled *Angle of Repose* was published in 1986 and represented a significant new advance for Hallwalls as an organization.

Ed Cardoni took over the reins of the literature program at Hallwalls in the 1984-85 season of programming and has continued to coordinate the program over the past decade, even as he assumed the additional responsibilities of becoming Hallwalls' Program Director in 1988 and its Executive Director in the fall of 1990. One thing Ed did with the program a few years into his tenure was drop the "Fiction Diction" moniker.

Cardoni also brought a truly international scope to his programming by presenting readings by such prominent figures in world literature as the Chilean author Ariel Dorfman, Argentinean native Luisa Valenzuela, and the Czechoslovakian-born Josef Skvorecky. Another initiative he undertook was a series of bilingual readings set at various sites in Buffalo's Hispanic community.

Even more impressive was his compilation, financing, and editing of two more Hallwalls fiction anthologies, *Blatant Artifice* (1986) and *Blatant Artifice*, 2/3 (1988), both of which were distributed and favorably reviewed nationally. Even in the face of substantial funding cuts, Hallwalls' own internal challenges, and the changing demographics of the area literary scene over the past five years, Ed has maintained the integrity of Hallwalls' streamlined literary programming as representative of the leading edge of innovative North American fiction writing in the 1990s.

Among the writers who have read (or been in residence) at Hallwalls during Cardoni's stewardship of its literature program are Jay Cantor, Marianne Hauser, Mark Leyner, Patrick McGrath, Catherine Texier, Lynne Tillman, Holly Hughes, Harvey Pekar, Oscar Hijuelos, Gloria Naylor, Jamaica Kincaid, Darius James, Clarence Major, and National Book Award-winning novelist Charles Johnson. As Hallwalls continues to integrate its programming thematically in festival formats (such as the biennial "Ways in Being Gay" and the 1994 "New Fiction Festival," organized by the UB English Department but held in Hallwalls' new gallery a few days after it opened), we can continue to look forward to emerging talents of the first order: writers as challenging and diverse as recent seasons' readers, who included Dorothy Allison, Chris Mazza, and Mark Amerika.

EDMUND CARDONI:

from the introduction to
Blatant Artifice #1, 1986

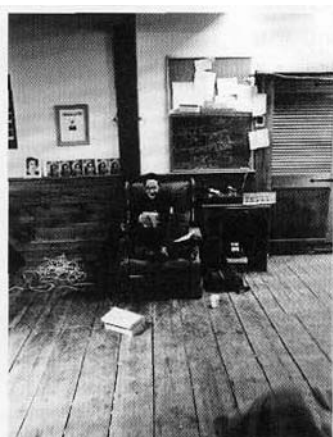
It isn't David Leavitt per se that makes the ink in my veins boil, merely everything his writing represents. ... But it's the critics trying to cram him down my throat who really piss me off, him and Jay McInninny [sic] and the rest of those pale print counterparts of Hollywood tyke idols who are supposed to be the cream of my generation and somehow represent our Zeitgeist the way the Beats and Sylvia Plath, say, represented our parents', or Kesey and Brautigan represented our older brothers' and sisters'. ("Our sisters?" you say. "*Kesey and Brautigan*?" A good point. And since we're talking generations and gender, let's get it out of the way right now: one of my biggest beefs with these uptown neo-tweeds is that they seem to me pawns in a kind of last-ditch white upper-class male plot to take serious U.S. fiction back from the women who had—a mere sliver of a sub-generation earlier, as epochs are reckoned these days [i.e., early '80s]—succeeded in dominating it. But just as a tiny slice of the hemisphere's geo-political pie like Nicaragua, say, is too much for our white male rulers to let fall into the hands of a bunch of brown-skinned Reds in green fatigues, so even a lustrum of U.S. literary history is five years too many to surrender to a bevy of glorified Kelly Girls who got uppity with their typewriters, or who, at the very least, should have confined their romantic scribbblings to the back of Redbook. Although in fairness to David Leavitt, more than half the writers in the current issue of *Mississippi Review* which he guest-edited are women. Like I said, a pawn in a plot. Not David himself.)

... Literature is not fashion, and shouldn't be treated as such. When I sit down to write, or look around for books to read for that matter, the last thing on my mind is who the hottest writers are this week according to *Vogue* or *Vanity Fair* or *The New York Times Book Review*, let alone the latter's bestseller list. In my head, rather, when writing especially, are all the generations of writers living and dead (some of the living being among the deadest, by the way), whose language has set their writing apart from or in the forefront or on the fringes of the various crowds that bred them. Sterne for starters, Stein notably next. Then a whole flood in the rest of our century which has occasionally redirected the course of the mainstream, more often has moved as a strong counter-current deep beneath it or got caught in eddies in odd crannies at the edges, but in which the best, those worthy of the name writer, have always swum and dived, alike for the slimy sticks and buried treasures of human consciousness and the unconscious, and—this being writing we're talking about, one fine way of wisdom among others—the language through which both realms try to make their meanings known.

cont. next page

... The "new" writers celebrated in the slicks as well as published in most of the more perennial literary reviews have returned to making "well-crafted" (read "dreadfully linear, slavishly realistic, stylistically vapid, and verbally lifeless") stories about recognizable contemporary experience, predominantly white, educated, middle-class family experience bloodlessly severed from any messy historical, political, or economic context. ... If this stuff is on the cutting edge of anything, it's of a sterling silver butter spreader resting on the gilt edge of a white china bread plate on a thickly padded white linen tablecloth on the table in the family dining room, with father at the head and the writers' napkins in their laps. And the butter had better be real soft.

[Blatant Artifice #1 contained writing by Mark Leyner, Ronald Ehrlke, Norma Kassirer, Alan Bigelow, Lisa Blaushild, Catherine Texier, Carole Southwood, Martin Pops, Raymond Federman, Marianne Hauser, Welch Everman, Patrick McGrath, and Jane Brakhage. BA #2/3 included Cynthia Brown Dwyer, Lenora Champagne, Peter Cherches, Jeffrey DeShell, Ariel Dorfman, Janice Eidus, Karen Finley, Emanuel Fried, Judy Lopatin, Glenn O'Brien, Pat Oleszko, Harvey Pekar, Nancy Peskin, R. D. Pohl, Reinaldo Povod, Joel Rose, Josef Skvorecky, Michael Sticht, Fiona Templeton, Lynne Tillman, Luisa Valenzuela, and Barry Yourgrau, among others.]



Kathy Acker performance, Dec. 4, 1977.



Walter Abish, Nov. 9, 1977.

ROBERT CREELEY: ONLY YESTERDAY

"Into the same river no man steps once."

—Gregory Corso

It seems like only yesterday—but what doesn't these days. Coming to Buffalo first in 1966 and then contriving to spend as much time away as here, my own "arrival" (at least emotionally) corresponds in a weird way with Hallwalls' initial '70s digs on Essex Street to which I could walk comfortably from my bachelor (though thankfully not long to stay so) pad on Fargo. Beginnings, beginnings! Already Ed Cardoni under guidance of his *locayo* Ed Dorn was plotting entry to UB, and so to his present responsibilities, had he but known.

Two particular times among many stand out in recollections. I can't remember, however, which came first, though I do recall dearly the poignantly fragile setup for so-called performers back then, the rasping sound, the intimate audiences, often only one's friends. As ever the verbal artists (like) got to manage their own scenes as best they could. It was all grass roots—a fact I value immensely to this day.

So it was we got to meet Kathy Acker, who stayed with us for a reading at the scene—and remember getting letter from friend/artist Larry Bell quoting at length his own mentor of that time, H.G. Wells, which quote Kathy then read (not spotting source) and figured as a very much with it sense of art. Well, small world forever. H.G. Wells and Kathy Acker would certainly have enjoyed each other's company sans the least irony. Truly it's always the same.

Then, more complexly, Walter Abish came, and again we were hosts for his provision. He was a bit apprehensive about the whole business. He always is—a factor of his terrific art, finally, that he can build self-perpetuating programs, thus disarming "reality." When he saw that Essex Street situation, I thought we were going to lose him then and there. But it worked out, and I am sure he well remembers it as a place where people were for real and his own defining art welcomed indeed.

Now it seems we're back to beginnings again, a twenty year loop of great accomplishment and useful expansion. And still the frontiers beckon, else stalk us like wolves in the night. I remember years ago Lenny Bruce's great spiel with dumb guy asking him, the jazz musician, "What do you think about art?" And him saying, "Art was a small town cat before he joined the band." At Hallwalls there's always a light in the window and, with our care, there always will be.

**RAYMOND FEDERMAN:
HALLWALLS IS THE PLACE**

From the old days on Essex Street
with the broken-down furniture
to the 700 Main Street vault
and the lousy smelly elevator
to the fabulous Trico Space
HALLWALLS has always inspired
me to experiment with fiction
and has always been receptive
to those experiments however
preposterous these may have been
and so here we go again
for the best way to express
my gratitude to HALLWALLS
is to offer yet another
preposterous piece of fiction:

THE INTERROGATORS

+++++

THE HOLE
(past/there)

THE DESK
(present/here)

THE ROOM
(intimacy/elsewhere)

[digressions / redoubling / repetitions]

moment 1 moment 7

moment 3 moment 8

moment 5

moment 6

moment 2

moment 9

moment 4

child + old man = he = me + family + death

[story/fiction/lies]

the interrogated - storyteller - the liar

"Tell us who you are?"

[history/reality/truth]

+++

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

the interrogators - the listeners - the others

BRUCE BENDERSON: SURVIVOR'S VISION

As a curious leftover of a nearly extinct species—a polymorphous-perverse, ex-addict bisexual with continual involvements in underclass street life, who is not yet dead or dying— I look back at my Hallwalls experience with the curtailed vision of the survivor.

So much has happened since that late eighties appearance. Worn brain cells are trying to pull up the Bruce Benderson who rode the train up to Buffalo, after visiting his aging parents in his hometown of Syracuse, New York.

In more than one sense I was a “newbie.” Hallwalls gave me a first precious experience to test out public opinion about my fiction. I was barely out there—but, notably, published in the Penguin anthology *Between C & D*. I was also a new recruit to that last site of true urban multiculturalism—vanishing Times Square, where limited interactions between different classes are still possible, mostly through the mediums of prostitution and drugs.

What now seems old hat—performing before others—had enormous impact on me then. And though the details are blurred, I can almost feel again the odd compression of space under the bright light as I strained to read my story.

Coming to Hallwalls was also a chance to come back to suburban uniformity as the triumphant Other. This was especially important to me because Buffalo was a place of childhood memories where our family would drive to visit relatives. The fact that I was returning to read a story about a drag queen and hustler bar and receive kudos for it was sweet and empowering. Vivez the aesthetic and perverse oasis called Hallwalls in the wasteland of the new Middle America!

ANA LYDIA VEGA: SUMMER OF '92

In 1992, Ed Cardoni invited me to do a residency in Buffalo. I remember that, as soon as I arrived, he gave me a little badge which I wore on my jacket all that summer and which read: “Discover Columbus’ Legacy: 500 Years of racism, oppression, and stolen land.” Little did I know then that I would be embarking on a voyage of personal and collective discovery that would put mean old Columbus to shame.

My one-month stay in Buffalo under Hallwalls’ patronage featured a number of close encounters with the local Puerto Rican community and the larger world of Latin American migrant farm workers in the state of New York. Half of Puerto Rico’s population has migrated to the eastern coast of the United States in search of jobs during this century and so, naturally, the subject is not a very popular one back home. It has become a kind of best-kept public secret which is not even mentioned in official textbooks in spite of its decisive influence on the island’s contemporary history. The readings at La Palma de Oro on Busti Avenue and the Pucho Olivencia Community Center on Swan Street, as well as the migrant camp reading tour through Steuben and Yates counties, gave me a unique opportunity to interact with my estranged compatriots and witness, from a very privileged point of view, a very small part of their hard lives on the dark side of paradise. A quiet exchange of gifts took place during those readings. I brought them a little joy and they gave me a lot of knowledge. But the experience was not a fleeting social-awareness spree or an exotic adventure in political tourism. It has stayed with me ever since, lodged in some hidden corner of my heart’s mind, secretly spreading its warmth unto my inspiration, strengthening the popular and oral roots of my work so that I may never lose sight of the fact that literature is, most of all, a celebration of humanity.

There were also some great extras on the Hallwalls package deal like going to weird art expos, meeting a number of American artists and writers, and enjoying the architectural beauties of the city, not to mention the evident pleasures of wine-tasting and Buffalo-winging along the way or the more dubious ones of reading in my very hesitant English (with Ed’s coaching, of course) before a mainly Anglo audience. Last, but absolutely not least, as in every voyage of discovery, I brought back a booty: the lasting friendship of those who conspired to make my stay a rich and unforgettable one.

I’m desperately looking for a punch-line and think I have the next best thing: a new badge that you can now give to unsuspecting pilgrims which reads: “Discover Hallwalls’ legacy: 20 years of art, love, and subversion.”

WHY IS A PEDESTAL BETTER THAN A SOAPBOX? THE ALTERNATIVE SPACE AS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION

EDMUND CARDONI

That entity called "Hallwalls"—that idea, that project, that space, that institution—has always been (and remains) so multifaceted that no one essay, no single point of view could possibly do it justice. It was one thing for those who founded it (a hangout, a laboratory, a launching pad, a legacy), and has been many things to many others in the twenty years since then. Like the elephant described by blind men, it's a different animal depending on where you grab it. One thing it has always been, however, is a collective enterprise (enough blind men working together will eventually get the elephant right), one that has been shaped not only by the politics of the times and by movements in the various fields of art, but by the passionate concerns (artistic and political) of the individuals affiliated with it: artists, staff, members, audiences. In this collective spirit, I am counting on all the other voices joining (and no doubt often contradicting) mine between the covers of this book to fill in the whole picture. It is the aim of those of us who happen to be still around and charged with the task of assembling this history to present Hallwalls in all its anarchic multiplicity; no single perspective will be permitted to prevail (though many will undoubtedly be inadvertently omitted), and all claims of authority shall—as always at Hallwalls—be subverted, starting with the director's.

I first wended my way to Hallwalls in 1982, started working there in 1984 (more than half its lifetime ago and—I shudder to think—over a quarter of my own), and have served as its director since 1990, coinciding with a period of unremitting crisis in the not-for-profit art world. This being the case, I feel a modest authority in—as well as responsibility for—setting down a piece of that history here, in the highly selective and heavily editorialized timeline which accompanies this polemic. But even among my coworkers of the past decade (let alone those who came before us) there has hardly been unanimity of opinion on the question of what Hallwalls is and what its purpose (and the purpose of art in general) should be, or even whether art should have a purpose beyond itself. Hallwalls' art-his-

20 YEARS OF POLITICAL ART AT HALLWALLS

(A SELECTIVE CHRONOLOGY
BY EDMUND CARDONI)

October 15, 1975

Lucy Lippard talks on women's art, Gallery 219, Buff State.

May–December 1978

Art for All, CETA-funded community art project, puts Hallwalls & CEPA artists in community centers citywide. (This early "outreach" project is funded by the Comprehensive Employment & Training Act—CETA—the New Deal-style jobs creation program enacted in 1973—and abolished by Ronald Reagan in 1981—that also made possible the first paid staff positions at HW & many other not-for-profit organizations. Defined along with many other target groups as "chronically unemployed," thousands of artists working on hundreds of projects nationwide were eligible for CETA funding.)

October 29, 1978

Artist talk by **Donna Henes** from feminist art mag collective *Heresies*, founded in 1977.

May 22, 1981

John Bernd & Tim Miller perform *Live Boys*, dedicating it to Harvey Milk on the birthday of the slain San Francisco Supervisor.

April 17, 1982

Former HW director **John Maggioletto** (1978–80), now on NEA Visual Arts staff, returns to discuss possible effects of Reagan appointments on funding for alternative spaces. Massive funding rescissions proposed by Reagan in 1981 had been successfully opposed by the Democratic majority in Congress. (It took the Republicans fourteen years—and an ocean of artists' piss and blood—but from the perspective of 1995, the Reagan era seems like the NEA's Golden Age.)

December 1982

CRASH, DAZE, & other NYC graffiti artists exhibit at HW.

November 1983

Communications Update, *Paper Tiger TV*, a Video Viewing Room (VVR) exhibition, presented by **Dee Dee Halleck & Liza Bear**. (Halleck had started *Paper Tiger TV* in 1981.) *Comic Relief: The Art of Contemporary Comics & Cartoons*, featuring **Sue Coe, Art Spiegelman, Lynda Barry**, & other socially-conscious comic artists. **TODT** installation referencing "sociopolitical forces, including war & social control." *Gaia, Mon Amour*, eco-performance by **Rachel Rosenthal** (11/10/83), with accompanying artist book published by HW.

March 24, 1984

Democracy in America, performance by **Tim Miller**, co-sponsored with & presented at **Media Study**, exploring "the nation's attitudes, feelings, & perceptions about our political institutions."

October 15, 1984

Mark Pauline presents video documentation of performances by his **Survival Research Laboratories**. Six years later—in the summer of 1990—the cancellation of SRL's scheduled performance at Artpark on the grounds that it involves "Bible burning" will provoke a demonstration by artists & the mass arrest of the "Artpark 18," a group of Buffalo artists (mostly HW members), leading to the formation of **BAARC: Buffalo Artists Against Repression & Censorship**.

February 10, 1985

Soviet dissident artists **Komar & Melamid** appear at a benefit for HW at the Italian American Community Center.

April 15–22, 1985

Three evenings of gay & lesbian experimental films screened at the Traf, organized by HW film curator **Steve Gallagher**. First of many gay & lesbian film series to come over the next decade.

April 16, 1985

Fiction Diction presents **Jay Cantor**, author of the novel *The Death of Che Guevara*.

May 10–June 8, 1985

Mass, a gallery installation by artists' collective **Group Material** (founded in NYC in 1979). Other NYC & West Coast visual artists' collectives emerge in this period (some earlier) & show work at Hallwalls at one time or another, including **Colab** (1977), **TODT**, **Border Art Workshop** (1984), **Guerrilla Girls** (1985), **Tim Rollins & KOS**, **LAPD** (1985), & **Gran Fury** (1988). Unlike the alternative space movement of a decade earlier, these artists collaborate to produce work (not just provide space to show it), move from space to space, & more often than not create public art works tied to a specific political agenda (U.S. intervention in Latin America, artworld sexism, AIDS awareness, border issues). In the same spirit a few years later, several Buffalo media arts collectives will form—all with connections to HW—including **BAARC**, **Media Coalition for Reproductive Rights** (**MCRH**), & **8mm News Collective**.

September 20, 1985

Political Messages: A Minute of Your Time opens in VVR, a compilation of short video messages on political themes organized by **Chris Hill** & produced at HW in response to an open call. HW director **Bill Currie** produces a nifty piece involving a record player & hand-lettered signs. I (a novice) produce one called "What Will You Do With Your Medium?" a preachy piece involving Reagan inaugural jellybeans, more hand-lettered signs (including quoted passages from the CIA's 1984 "assassination manual"), & a voice-over exhorting fellow artists to get political in response to U.S. intervention in Central America. (Earlier, Bill had let me hold an event in the gallery whose purpose was to collect school supplies & art materials for Nicaraguan kids as part of the "Tools for Peace" campaign.) The jellybean tape (my first) is picked up by **Deep Dish TV**.

EDMUND CARDONI

torical importance and ongoing contributions (through artists and curators past and present) to the fields of contemporary visual art, media arts, performance, and new music, and its unique niche in Buffalo's cultural scene as a presenter of and venue for innovative film, jazz, and fiction, are, of course, primary and essential, but are well covered elsewhere in this document by those best qualified to do so: the artists, curators, and critics in those fields. My own choice of emphasis here (Hallwalls as political animal) may be seen by some as slanted or too narrowly defined. But it is only an emphasis, arbitrarily chosen, and far from the whole story or final word. Having said that, let's close our eyes, grab the elephant by one of its hanging (and least aesthetic) parts, and begin.

The aspect of Hallwalls I have been closest to (besides the Literature program), that personally makes Hallwalls worth fighting for, that pisses off the most people (even some artists), and that has earned it much of the support it has gained in the larger progressive community (that is, the community outside the art world itself), has been its growing role as a progressive, irreverent, even radical political forum, a source of alternative information and critical perspectives on numerous contentious social issues, and a rallying point for dialogue and action, albeit always within the specific context of contemporary artistic practices. Hallwalls' assumption of this more public (one might even say more civic) role over the past 10 or 12 years has paralleled the larger politicization of the U.S. art world itself, and in particular the alternative space sector, the development of which Hallwalls has influenced far out of proportion to the size of the city in which it happens to be situated.

This welcome politicization and cultural diversification of the art world nationally—pioneered and prodded by the alternative spaces—and in Buffalo of Hallwalls in particular, has lately been decried by many, including many artists, longtime members, and even occasional Hallwalls curators. The first wave of remonstrance broke nationally in the furor (generally unfavorable) over the 1993 Whitney Biennial, the one in which two decades of alternative space practice (including many artists who had found early career support at Hallwalls) finally reached critical mass and exploded onto the museum's Madison Avenue walls. I'm afraid the ensuing reactionary backlash against politicized and multicultural art (what some critics have recently dubbed "victim art") on the part of people who should know better (i.e., "cultured" people) is just the art world's high-brow version of the more general (and more brutal) grudge-fueled backlash against feminist gains, affirmative action policies, gay rights, poverty programs, and other avatars of so-called "political correctness" that is rearing its ugly head everywhere these days.

This revictimization of the incompletely devictimized by the original victimizers (or incompletely overthrown)—what used to be called "blaming the

victim" but could now more accurately be called overthrowing the victim or relabeling the victim with his own paint brush—is just the latest reversal in the eternal wrestling match of class (and gender) struggle. Artists just got dragged into the scuffle, which is what happens when you leave the atelier (where the powers that be would be content to leave you) and poke your nose into the business of the world. But it is disheartening to note that each blunt plank of the right-wing, anti-"P.C." platform in the society at large has—without exception—its counterpart in the right wing of the art world. (It may be a smaller wing, but it's flapping.) Troublemaking lesbian and feminist performance artists, powerful women curators with axes to grind, militant gay artists, multiculturalism, the very notion of public funding itself (which is not only compared to "welfare" rhetorically to disparage it, but literally lumped together with it to eliminate it) are all under attack not only from without, but from within. Is it mere coincidence that just a few months after the "triumph" of making the cover of *Time* as the figurehead of a new renaissance in African-American arts, Bill T. Jones—black, gay, bereaved, HIV-positive, and performance-arty (i.e., undancerly)—is trashed, revictimized, in the pages of *The New Yorker* by a dance critic who—like like-minded critics of the arts in Congress—hadn't bothered to see the work she was trashing?

We had come to expect such opprobrium from our obvious and avowed enemies in the right wing of the Republican party, whose minions, having won power in the last election, are moving ahead this very season to consolidate their hold on it by abolishing what they perceive as government-funded organs of opposition (an oxymoron, by the way, that—if only it were true—would attest to the strength of our democracy, and not, as they argue, its degeneracy). Already gone is the Congressional Arts Caucus (and every other "special interest" caucus). Targeted for annihilation are public broadcasting, the Humanities Endowment (which funds university presses, historical documentaries, and other scholarly endeavors), the Institute for Museum Services (which funds places like the Burchfield-Penney Art Center as well as such hotbeds of subversion as local historical societies and children's museums), and—most importantly for Hallwalls—the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which has partly funded most of what we've done over the past 20 years, including the very publication you're holding in your hands.

It has struck the newly empowered Republicans—as sooner or later it strikes all aspiring totalitarians whatever their party, right or left—that perhaps the government whose purse strings they now hold shouldn't be subsidizing reporters, commentators, documentary filmmakers, video witnesses, and performance artists to expose their hypocrisy, uncover their chicanery, or point out injustices in the system. They're right, of course, in purely Machiavellian terms, although dead wrong in democ-

November 9–December 20, 1985

Image of War, joint HW/CEPA gallery exhibition & film series, mixing contemporary conceptual art, documentary photography from Hiroshima, & Nazi propaganda art from the U.S. Army vaults. Co-curated by Gary Nickard, Cathy Howe, & Steve Gallagher.

November 19, 1985

Fiction Diction presents El Salvadoran literature professor & FMLN spokesman **Arnoldo Ramos** speaking on "The Social Role of Literature & the Intellectual in Central America & the United States in the Present Crisis."

May 2, 1986

Fiction Diction presents exiled Czech novelist **Josef Skvorecky**.

May 9, 1986

Screening of **Lizzie Borden's** 1983 film *Born in Flames*, a narrative about the takeover of a TV station by armed feminist guerrillas.

September 19–21, 1986

HW & CEPA host the *Untitled* national conference of the National Association of Artists' Organizations (NAAO), which the two Buffalo organizations (along with 98 others nationally) had helped found in 1982. The 1986 conference at 700 Main Street features an appearance by the **Guerrilla Girls**, a talk by the late **Bill Olander** on the changing role of alternative spaces, & the first emergence of the multicultural spirit that will come to infuse future NAAO conferences. Besides its leadership role on issues of multiculturalism, NAAO will also play a lead advocacy role in the censorship battles of the early 90s.

October 1986

VVR exhibition entitled *Site-ing the Almighty: Religion & Media*, organized by **Chris Hill**, including **Neighbor to Neighbor's** *Faces of War*, on the crisis in Central America.

October 18, 1986

Fiction Diction presents *Writing as Witness*, featuring Buffalo writers **Cynthia Brown Dwyer** & **Elaine Rollwagen Chamberlain** reading & talking about their experiences in Iran (where Dwyer spent several months in prison as the "53rd hostage") & Central America (where Chamberlain worked as a volunteer nurse).

November 5–December 20, 1986

Look Who's Asking the Questions?, VVR exhibition with a Situationist slant, featuring (among others) the British union-produced *The Lie Machine* (1984) in which miners speak out against Thatcherite TV coverage of their strike.

February 26, 1987

Dan Walworth & **Ahmed Damian** present *Nazareth in August*, their 1986 videotape (co-produced with **Norman Cowie**) on Palestinians in Israel. (Co-sponsored with **Squeaky Wheel**.)

March 19–April 30, 1987

Reviewing Histories: Selections from New Latin American Cinema, organized by **Steve Gallagher** & guest-curated by **Coco Fusco**, with accompanying book of essays. Unexpectedly, the 224-page book fills a void in the field of Latin American film studies & is ordered as a teaching text by major university film & Latin American studies departments across the U.S. Consequently, it soon sells out its first (& only) printing. Nine years later requests for the book are still coming in.

April 1, 1987

Videomaker **Annie Goldson** shows tapes & talks about her work in Nicaragua.

April 8, 1987

Exiled Chilean writer **Ariel Dorfman** reads.

May 4, 1987

TV Sandino: TV from Nicaragua, guest-curated by **Annie Goldson** & **Carlos Pavam** of **Xchange TV**.

September 22, 1987

Puerto Rican writer **Manuel Ramos Otero** inaugurates HW's bilingual reading series at *La Palma de Oro*, with English read by translator (& NYSCA literature director) **Gregory Kolovakos**. A photo from the reading is later printed on the cover of *Gusto*, illustrating a story about Latino art in Buffalo. At dinner preceding the reading, Gregory—also a widely respected gay rights & AIDS activist—tells me that he himself has AIDS. I am then in the first year of a three-year term as a NYSCA literature panelist, having been appointed by Gregory. Before my term ends (1990), Gregory is dead at the age of 38. Later the same year, Manuel, too, dies of AIDS at 42, a huge loss to the Puerto Rican literary communities of both the island & NYC.

November 12, 1987

Electromagnetic Politics, a talk by **Robert Horvitz** invited to speak by artistic director **Alan Sondheim** (1987–88). An early discussion of a subject that will emerge as one of the most significant issues of our time, namely democratization versus monopolization of media.

February 1988

Double Vision, guest-curated exhibition by **Fred Wilson**. *Black Women Independent Filmmakers* series, including *Illusions*, the 1982 short film by **Julie Dash**. Guatemalan author **Victor Montejo** at *La Palma de Oro*. *The Politics of Information*, VVR exhibition organized by **Barbara Lattanzi** featuring tapes on El Salvador, healthcare, race riots, FBI harassment, & the Revolutionary Communist Party, along with exhibition of paintings by **MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes** artists on VVR walls.

March 1988

Nicaraguan poet **Yolanda Blanco**, Cuban American novelist **Oscar Hijuelos** (a few years before his Pulitzer Prize for *Mambo Kings*), & Colombian writer **Jaime Manrique** read at *La Palma de Oro*. **Robbie McCauley** performs *Indian Blood*. Novelists **Charles Johnson** & **Clarence Major** read at HW & participate in forum on Black fiction at U.B. Filipino filmmaker **Raymond Red** & NYC experimental filmmaker **Ela Troyano** present their films.

atic ones. Intellectuals (or those worth their salt, anyway) are a threat to their power, not because they constitute a liberal-left cultural elite imposing "political correctness" upon mainstream Americans from their ivory-tower strongholds, but simply because they think, read, and know a little about arcane subjects like history. Analytical thought and historical perspective (an understanding, for example, of precisely how a fascist regime manipulates the basest instincts in those it hopes to rule to install itself in power) are the last things they want running around loose in the land, let alone fed by government handouts. Naturally they don't want your children being "brainwashed" (i.e., having their minds unclouded) by teachers armed with "revisionist" history books or artists armed with grants. They don't want listener-supported sages like Daniel Schorr undistorting what Snapple-backed Rush Limbaugh has grown so fat distorting. (How perverse, how Orwellian that this overgrown Goebbels—this gadfly turned bootlicker—should have reduced women asserting equal rights to "feminazis"; how tragic that this reactionary propaganda has been embraced by so many as "revolutionary," a breath of fresh air instead of the belch of hot air it really is.)

The institutions that harbor intellectuals (and the federal agencies which up to now have funded those institutions), by virtue of the fact that they foster free inquiry are, to some extent, and should be to an even greater extent, organs of opposition, critical analysis, and challenge to the status quo, particularly the new status quo of repression, heartlessness, "privatization," and "party discipline." The Republicans—and it's now permissible to speak so sweepingly, since such moderate Republicans as used to grace Capitol Hill have been purged or silenced by the Newtonian juggernaut (talk about "politically correct"!)—know full well that the so-called "cultural elite" comprising such endangered species as college professors, public librarians, tape-recorder-toting NPR reporters, starving artists, unemployed art teachers, semi-employed classical musicians, poets-in-the-schools, overworked museum curators, underpaid directors of alternative spaces, et al. (all of whom I am proud to number among Hallwalls' constituency)—insofar as it exists at all—actually serves as a counterforce (or at least an irritant) to the real elite (no quotes).

And who is (are?) the real elite, as opposed to this straw-man "cultural elite"? GOPAC-backed House Speakers with megabuck book deals who want to shut down small presses, homophobic House Majority leaders fighting a raise in the minimum wage "with every fiber of their being" (except those fibers needed for zeroing the NEA and verbally gay-bashing Congressional colleagues), millionaire Senators (and would-be Senators), talk-radio-host authors of best-selling books with TV shows and a spare toothbrush in the Congressional washroom, money-grubbing televangelists selling salvation via satellite, telecommunications titans with cables

like tentacles in every community in America, developers dreaming of deregulation, capitalists calculating their coming tax breaks, manufacturers lining up cheap labor overseas and busting unions at home, and defense contractors biding their time until their representatives in Washington can identify (or invent) a new enemy, a new "missile gap," to justify the next pointless arms build-up. In other words, the same fat cats George Grosz was caricaturing in that degenerate art Hitler didn't like.

They (the real elite, the one with all the money and power, if not all the talent) try to portray us (the cultural elite who can barely make ends meet) as monolithic (a multicultural monolith, another oxymoron) and themselves as decentralized and populist. Of course, they are the monolith, what one of their own dubbed the "military-industrial complex," the daddy of all "special interests," the ruling class. And we—in our classrooms, colleges, libraries, lofts, public access channels, public radio stations, small presses, and alternative spaces all over America, even in Buffalo—are truly decentralized. (What could be more decentralized than Buffalo?) And—despite our artistic gifts, ear for music, way with words, hand-held camcorders, and MFAs—we have relatively little clout. Economically, we're a lot closer to the underclass than we are to any ruling elite. Like the poor slipping through that threadbare safety-net the plutocrats keep trying to unravel, we're marginal as well as fringe. Nonetheless, they want to put us all out of business. Though we ourselves may doubt it in this dark night of our collective soul, our enemies appreciate (and fear) the illuminating power art and other forms of knowledge can have. (What is art but one form of knowledge?) Why else would snuffing that power be so near the top of their agenda?

This is hardly the first time in this century the cultural elite has been marked for extinction, or been sacrificed as the scapegoat for declining national values. As experimental novelist and Holocaust survivor Raymond Federman pointed out at the "Save the Art World" rally at Hallwalls last January [1995], the final solution started with bookburning and displays of "degenerate" art, and the battle for the hearts and minds of the German people was waged first in the arena of aesthetics. They boarded up the Bauhaus and drove artists like Brecht and Weill into exile, along with the scholars of the Frankfurt School. One of them, Walter Benjamin, despaired at the border and killed himself. (Sure, he's quoted a lot by graduate students, some of whom can even pronounce his name correctly, but that's cold comfort to him.) Mussolini put Commie writers like Antonio Gramsci and Ignazio Silone in jail. Hollywood actors, directors, and screenwriters who had, around the same time, tried on Communism for size and—like Silone and Orwell—rejected it, were, years later, merely blacklisted and banished from their art for the youthful folly of taking the First Amendment at face value. The Czech Communists repeatedly put a playwright in jail who (with great dramatic irony) would one day lead a "Velvet

April 5–May 10, 1988

A Tribute to Third World Newsreel on its 20th anniversary, featuring films from 1968 on Black Panthers, Yippies, & Ho Chi Minh.

April 30/May 1, 1988

North American premiere of *Infermental 7*, an international video exhibition produced in Buffalo for world distribution by Chris Hill, Tony Conrad, Peter Weibel, & Rotraut Pape. (Coproduction of HW & Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria.)

May 1988

Young, British & Black, co-production of HW & Third World Newsreel guest-curated by Coco Fusco, with accompanying monograph published in Buffalo by HW. Examines black film & video collectives in Britain. Hundreds of copies of the book are shipped overseas for distribution in Britain.

June 24–July 2, 1988

The Other Sex, a gay film festival organized by Steve Gallagher, attempts to expand the film audience by including more "mainstream" gay & lesbian films (such as *Desert Hearts*) along with more adventure-some fare like Gus Van Sant's first feature *Mala Noche* & the films of Rosa von Praunheim.

September 23, 1988

The Politics of Drinking Water, slide lecture by WNY artist Robert Holland.

November 1988

First biannual *Ways in Being Gay* festival, founded by Ron Ehmke. The title (which, like "Hallwalls" itself, everybody gets wrong) is taken from a recurrent phrase in a Gertrude Stein story. Features return engagements by Tim Miller & Holly Hughes in their pre-"NEA 4" days, along with dozens of other artists & writers from across the country. HW writer-in-resident Hughes appears as a featured participant in the First International Women Playwrights Conference, & organizes some conference events at HW.

November 7, 1988

ACT UP Zaps Buffalo. Artist members of ACT UP-NYC—including the late Ray Navarro—visit HW to report on their organizing & educational activities; ACT UP-WNY forms two years later, using Hallwalls as its primary meeting space.

November 18–December 17, 1988

Salvage Lounge: Of Product By Public, a collaborative, multimedia installation by Milwaukee media artist Rob Danielson & sculptor Terese Agnew, created with citywide community participation & a grant from the NEA Inter-Arts Program.

November 20, 1988

Ana Lydia Vega & Magali Garcia Ramis—visiting writers from Puerto Rico recommended to me by Manuel Ramos Otero—read at a packed *La Palma de Oro*. Patrons of the bar ask Ana Lydia to read one story a second time. She will return for a three-week residency in July 1992.

December 8, 1988

Min Joang Video, political video from Korea

January 7–February 3, 1989

Viewing *Baby from the Blimp*, a VVR installation by media artist **Brian Springer** gives gallery-goers their first glimpse of the signature satellite “backhaul” material he will develop for the feature film *Feed* (1992) and his own feature-length video project *Spin* (1995). Brian decides to remain in Buffalo, produces *Artwaves* (HW’s weekly public-access TV show) for a while, & coordinates the 1991 **Border Art Workshop** project, all the while scanning the skies with his roof full of satellite dishes.

January 10–February 1, 1989

Red: First Encounters with a Closed Cult, recent films from the USSR & GDR, organized by visiting curators from Berlin **Jürgen Brüning** & **Andreas Wildfang**.

April 1–28, 1989

Traversing Cultural & Political Terrain, VVR exhibition including **Louis Hock’s** *The Mexican Tapes*.

September 26–November 9, 1989

The Politics & Poetics of Feminism, Sexuality, & Reproductive Freedom, video exhibition organized by **Barbara Lattanzi**.

October 15, 1989

Peter Matthiessen reading from his new novel & discussing his long-suppressed & recently republished book on the Leonard Peltier case, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. (Co-sponsored with **Just Buffalo**.)

October 20, 1989

CENSORED: An Evening of Objectionable Art. A response to the attacks on Mapplethorpe & Serrano, with a special taped message by **Karen Finley** & appearances by filmmaker **Sandy Daley** (*Robert Having His Nipple Pierced*) & **Joel Snyder** of the soon-to-be defunct NEA Inter-Arts program. It’s standing-room-only in The Vault.

December 1, 1989

HW participates in first national “day of art & action against AIDS” organized nationally by **VISUAL AIDS**, a group coincidentally co-founded in NYC by HW’s first post-Longo director **Patrick O’Connell** (1977–78). HW events, organized by **Ron Ehmke**, include a noon street performance outside HW & an evening program of videotapes & performances.

February 1, 1990

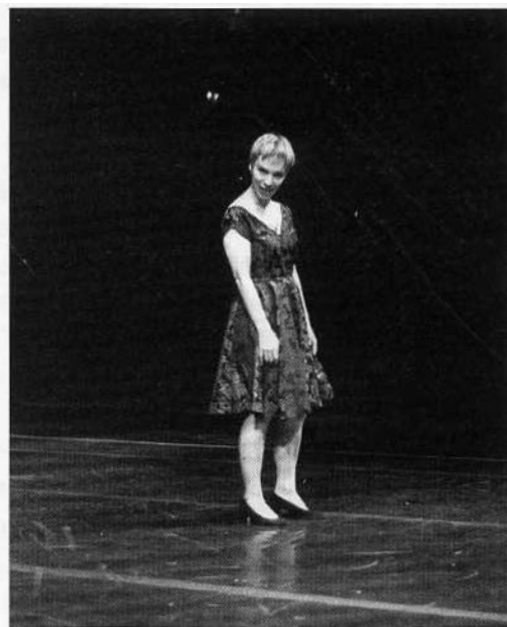
First Thursday, HW’s ongoing monthly showcase of local & regional work, presents a double bill featuring two local artists’ collectives: the **Media Coalition for Reproductive Rights (MCCR)**, presenting selections from their weekly public-access show *Pro-Choice Planet*, & **The Ladies of the Lake**, a Bush-era satirical performance & guerrilla theater troupe.

February 2–10, 1990

VIDEO WITNESSES: Festival of New Journalism, featuring *Making News/Making History: Live from Tiananmen Square*, an audio/video installation by **Shu Lea Cheang**.

Revolution” (the velvet of theater curtains?) and get himself elected president. (Score one for the cultural elite!) In China and Cambodia, they killed intellectuals and other class enemies in the name of “Cultural Revolution.” (Sound familiar, Newt?) In Chile (with a little help from Uncle Sam) they (different ideology, same they) rounded them up in a soccer stadium and cut off their hands. (They couldn’t play guitar or write poems anymore, but at least they could still play soccer.) In Argentina they disappeared them. The lucky ones—like Luisa Valenzuela, Chilean Ariel Dorfman, Czech Josef Skvorecky, and Guatemalans Victor Montejo and Arturo Arias (all of whom came to read at Halfwalls in the days before some of their countries were freed and New York State funding for literature was cut)—reappeared in exile to spread the word. For Salman Rushdie, even exile is no refuge, but the mullahs haven’t scared the pen out of his hand either.

We are exceedingly blessed in this country. They don’t kill artists here, and only occasionally (as in Cincinnati and at Artpark a few years ago) put them in jail, and even then, not for very long. All they do here is take grants away from artists they don’t like. And from publicly-funded spaces that might then dare to show their work. (The fatwa on Karen Finley, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller just kills their grants and maybe a few gigs, not them.) And then they cut programs like Inter-Arts for giving



Holly Hughes, *World Without End*, Oct. 26, 1991 benefit performance at the Pfeiffer Theatre. Photo: Maria Venuto

grants to artists and places like them in the first place. And then all the rest of the programs for giving grants to artists and institutions of any kind. Then they eliminate the arts agencies altogether. And cut state university budgets. And school district budgets, starting with the arts. And public library budgets. And then deregulate the telecommunications industry so a few obscenely wealthy and powerful monopolists can buy up all the bandwidth and cable right-of-way they don't own already, ensuring that the only messages that get heard are commercial messages, and that the only enterprises that survive are profitable enterprises, and that the profits (and the politicians profits can buy) are concentrated in as few hands as possible. And that those hands are theirs. As Federman said, it's not so bad.

So maybe they're right, my friends who feel that art has gotten too political (and therefore less artful), and that multiculturalism—while adding some welcome spice to the bland dish of high culture—may have gone just a little too far. Maybe politics (including identity politics) should be banned from art as it is from family dinner table conversation, for the sake of good digestion. Particularly the politics of oppression, since who but the oppressed can stomach that bitter dish? (Certainly not the oppressors.) (Does my sarcasm brand me as a "victim"?) Perhaps art should be colorblind (as long as that color is white) and gender-neutral (as long as that gender is male), and universal (as long as that universe is Europe), and discreet about its sexuality (which can be homo as long as it doesn't say so).

My colleagues who believe this are not alone; the politicians join them in wishing artists would stay out of politics (not to mention in the closet). Maybe if we had, we'd still be spared our few crumbs of the federal budget. I mean, military marching bands and statues of victorious generals on rearing stallions are O.K. to fund from the public coffers, as are the portraits of themselves they commission to deck their marbled halls. But giant shuttlecocks? Tilted arcs? Drag queens with camcorders in City Hall? Even a Smithsonian exhibition suggesting there may have been a downside to the bombing of Hiroshima—which, lest we forget, packed the wall of twenty Kobe earthquakes in its artfully designed package marked "Made in America"—was shut down by veterans groups before it even opened. (Maybe—like the Corcoran Art Gallery's 1989 Mapplethorpe show—the unexpurgated Enola Gay exhibit will find a home at WPA, too.)

Of course, while they're at it, the politicians don't much care for abstract art either, when it comes right down to it, or new music, or anything modern, let alone post-modern, even though none of that stuff is political in the least. So, Hilton Kramer, you may agree with Jesse Helms on what you *don't* like (crosses in urine, yams in fannies, dancing AIDS victims), but I wouldn't bet on his agreeing with you on what you *do* like. To you and Jesse alike, Andres Serrano is a "jerk," but to Jesse, Jackson Pollock's just another drip. And anyway, isn't it the politicians who really

January-June 1990

Robbie McCauley's *Buffalo Project* in production.

This collaborative theater work rooted in local race history will be the model for a series of similar projects in other cities by the nationally-renowned performance artist which—6 years later—is still ongoing. Commissioned & produced for HW by **Ron Ehmke**, in collaboration with members of **Ujima Theater**. Performances at HW, Polish Community Center (PCC), & Langston Hughes Institute.

September 21–November 3, 1990

Labor Intensive, VVR exhibition on labor & workplace issues organized by **Barbara Lattanzi** & featuring *Sense of Duty*, a new video work by *Salvage Lounge* artist **Rob Danielson**.

November 1990

Second biannual *Ways in Being Gay* festival, featuring a performance by the late visual artist & writer **David Wojnarowicz**, who had first appeared at HW in 1983, & whose essay for a recent exhibition at Artists Space (*Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing*) has sparked one of the earliest controversies of John Frohnmayer's stormy tenure as NEA Chairman. **Brenda & Glenda**, drag queen public-access producers from Manhattan, are invited to Buffalo to cover the festival & pay a memorable visit to Mayor Griffin at City Hall.

February 15–March 27, 1991

Video Witnesses 2, presenting "activist expression, alternative perspectives, & critical voices from around the U.S., Latin America, Canada, [Asia,] & Europe." Visiting artists **Annie Goldson** & **Chris Bratton** present *Framing the Panthers in Black & White* & their *Counterterror* projects on Northern Ireland & Puerto Rico. Over 100 festival entries are shown at HW, at other community sites, & on public access cable TV, grouped under such headings as "Latin America, War, Taxes, Flags"; "The Environment, Urban Economics, Romania"; "Gulf Crisis Program"; and "Sexuality, Gay Activism, Censorship." Festival award-winners include a work-in-progress version of **Barbara Trent's** *The Panama Deception*, which in its completed form goes on to win the Academy Award for Best Documentary, to be banned from PBS, & to be one of HW's most successful film screenings ever.

July 17–August 19, 1991

South = North = South, a WNY residency project by the **Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo** of San Diego/Tijuana, made possible with a major grant from The Ford Foundation.

October 26, 1991

HW benefit featuring playwright/performance artist **Holly Hughes** (now of the "NEA 4") & First Amendment lawyer **H. Louis Sirkin**, who had successfully defended **Dennis Barrie**—director of Cincinnati's Contemporary Art Center—against obscenity charges for exhibiting photographs by **Robert Mapplethorpe**. (HW—in collaboration with the Albright-Knox—had shown other work of Mapplethorpe's in a group show ten years earlier.)

September 5-6, 1991

A reading by Guatemalan novelist **Arturo Arias** (*After the Bombs*) & a screening of *El Norte*, the acclaimed 1983 film to which **Arias** had contributed material for the Guatemalan sequences. (Organized by **Cynthia Brown Dwyer** & co-sponsored—like so many HW projects in this period—with many community organizations.)

October 8-29, 1991

Kino Polski, Polish film series co-sponsored with the PCC & curated by HW film curator **René Broussard**, featuring a presentation by exiled director **Richard Bugajski** of his 1990 film *Interrogation*.

October 18-19, 1991

Filipino filmmaker **Kidlat Tahimik**, co-sponsored with Squeaky Wheel, CEPA, & CNYPG.

December 6-8, 1991

Charles Burnett Film Retrospective, including a panel discussion at **Langston Hughes Institute** on **Burnett's** new documentary on race, *America Becoming*. Panelists include **Burnett**, producer **Dai Sil Kim-Gibson**, & local respondents. Organized by **René Broussard**.

March 7-April 18, 1992

The Abortion Project opens in the gallery & VVR. Guest-curators of this traveling exhibition—which originated at the Hartford, CT alternative space **Real Art Ways (RAW)**—are Buffalo native & early HW artist **Chrysanne Stathacos** & NYC painter **Kathe Burkhart**, who had been featured in a Cathy Howe-era HW exhibition, *Vulgar Realism*. New HW visual arts curator **Sara Kellner** organizes a regional component to complement the traveling show, & acting video curator **Laura McGough** organizes community production residencies on reproductive issues by teens, health-workers, & others. By coincidence, *The Abortion Project* is on the walls when *Operation Rescue* comes to town. The exhibition serves as a rallying point for pro-choice activism, clarifying the connection between artistic freedom & reproductive choice. Clinic harassers by day picket the HW opening by night.

September 19, 1992

A Certain Level of Denial, the new performance by **Karen Finley**, sells out Rockwell Hall as HW's most successful benefit to date. Karen attributes her appearance at HW ten years earlier (on a double bill with the Kipper Kids) as her first professional gig, & performed here a second time in 1987. Her installation *Written in Sand*, "a memorial to those who have died of AIDS," opens in the Project Room September 25, 1992.

October 9-25, 1992

Video Witnesses 3: Networking in the 90's features such program titles as "Guerrilla Television"; "International Politics"; "Native American Landrights"; "Housing, Taxes, & Unemployment"; & "First Amendment Issues & Camcorder Activism," as well as the Buffalo premieres of *Feed*—the feature documentary on the 1992 elections to which **Brian Springer** has contributed satellite feeds—and *Spring of Lies*, chronicling *Operation Rescue's* failed attempt to shut down Buffalo clinics the previous April, produced by **MCRR**. Artists-in-residence include **Tom Poole** of **Not Channel Zero** & representatives of the Women's Workshop of the **Tariagsuk Video Center** in Igloodik, Northwest Territories.

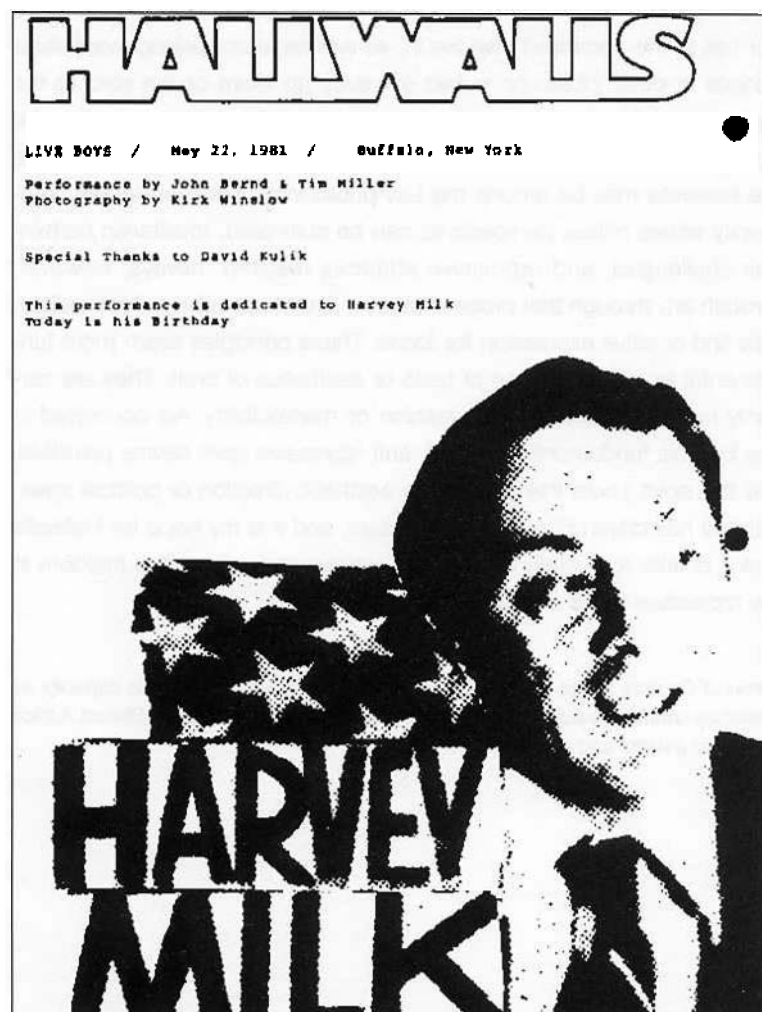
politicize art by dragging it off the gallery walls and onto the floor of Congress? O.J.'s on trial on Court-TV and art's on trial on C-SPAN, and as long as it is, art had better stay as political as its prosecutors. I wish my apolitical art friends (who I know deep down are not racist, sexist, or homophobic) could see that by calling for a depoliticization of art, a return to unculturalism, and a denial of identity, they're allying themselves willy-nilly with Newt Gingrich and all the white male reactionaries (yes, Newt, reactionaries, not "true revolutionaries," since what you are revolting against had not yet beat you) who put that gavel in his pudgy fist.

For most of its 20 years—from Cindy Sherman's film stills to **Brian Springer's** satellite feeds—**Hallwalls** (in anarcho-syndicalist alliance with spaces like it across the country) has served as an alternative not only to the art establishment, but—through its critical positioning and unwavering skepticism—to larger structures of social authority and control, including above all those of the various image industries. As my timeline demonstrates by omission, for the first eight years or so (1975-1982), the emphasis was primarily on challenging strictly art world assumptions (which certainly did need challenging), or on deconstructing representation itself, an enterprise which certainly had profound subversive potential provided it could reach beyond a strictly art-world or academic audience. Seemingly little attention was paid to the larger sociopolitical issues (race, gay rights, U.S. foreign policy) which had presumably been exhausted by the Sixties (and early Seventies) countercultural movements of a few years earlier (with the exception, perhaps, of the sophisticated gender issues so significantly informing the work of artists like Sherman).

But in the five-year period starting in 1983 the emphasis in the art world and at **Hallwalls** started shifting noticeably (I would say broadening, others might say narrowing) to the political arena, and not only in terms of its content. For it was in this period that the critical force of the alternative spaces' analysis of representation (and critique of its dominant modes of transmission) was finally applied to what non-artist activists would recognize as real issues. This was particularly so in the field of video, which at **Hallwalls** as at other media arts centers and in allied TV projects such as *Paper Tiger* and *Deep Dish*—though certainly not in most museum video departments—was always the most politically engaged.

And the times did call for political engagement, from artists no less than everyone else. Reaganism was rampant, AIDS was decimating the art world (and ACT UP was forming in response, side by side and overlapping with many allied artists' collectives), and the Sandinista victory of 1979 (a government of poets promising to create a kind of "alternative space" on the world stage) was feeling the bite of Ronald Reagan's CIA-trained, taxpayer-fed attack dogs. In NYC artists organized the "Artists' Call" in solidarity with the besieged government of Nicaragua and the ter-

rorized people of El Salvador, the East Village was luring artists away from SoHo and putting them in proximity to the downtrodden here at home, and dozens of storefront galleries there were forging the alternative aesthetics that spaces like Hallwalls had invented (and imported to SoHo) a decade earlier. The times they were a changin' again, and it was time for the alternative spaces (and the individual artists they served) to move in a new direction, to provide alternatives to more than just the art world. And when just a few years into it the hot flame of the East Village gallery scene was extinguished by the cold Perrier of yuppification, and the fittest of the avant-garde (or those with commodities to purvey) regrouped a few blocks away in SoHo with their tails between their legs, the alternative spaces (written off by some in our field as obsolete when the East Village galleries had seemed to be where the action was, although never Hallwalls, since we didn't have an East Village in Buffalo, or a SoHo either, for that matter, but introduced Buffalo audiences to the best of both) were still standing to carry on the aesthetic battles that had engen-



Tim Miller and John Bernd, program for *Live Boys*, May 22, 1981.

November 1992

3rd biannual *Ways in Being Gay* festival.

February 6-12, 1993

The Visual Politics of Hip-Hop, a HW video exhibition (organized by acting curator **Laura McGough**) which later tours nationally.

March 6-April 23, 1994

Onondaga sculptor **Tom Huff's** *The Nuclear Indian* & Buffalo painter **James Allen's** *I Am Poor, I Am Hungry*, curated by **Sara Kellner**, open in the main gallery & Project Room.

May 15, 1993

Judith Jackson performs *WOMB man WARS*, a brilliant experimental theater work inspired by the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas affair. The following October, **Ujima Company**—with a little help from HW—will bring the show back for a successful three-week run at TheaterLoft.

June 17-26, 1993

Eastern Europe TV & Politics—**Chris Hill's** four-part contribution to *Off the Track*, HW's series of world film & video for the International Cultural Festival of the World University Games—features recent video from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania, & Bulgaria. These tapes—never before seen in the U.S.—show that the fall of Communist totalitarian regimes in the East had more to do with dissent among the people themselves—and with their gaining control of communications media through which they could voice that dissent—than with Reagan's deficit-swelling defense build-up.

September 22, 1993

Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky & the Media plays to capacity crowds; still most successful HW film presentation ever. The film ends by extolling alternative presses & alternative media networks.

October 2, 1993

Premiere of *My Name is Allegany County*, a feature-length videotape documenting citizen resistance to state efforts to locate a low-level nuclear waste dump in West Valley, NY, post-produced at HW by **Kevin O'Shaughnessy**.

October 15-November 19, 1993

Tactical TV: Storytelling & Communications Policy, video series featuring *Fiberspace*, a national panel on the new information superhighway, & a program entitled "Citizens' TV from Eastern Europe 1989-90."

April 22-30, 1994

Building on Labor, video series addressing labor issues guest-curated by **Annie Ferguson** in cooperation with the PCC & the WNY Council on Occupational Safety & Health (WNYCOSH).

October 7-November 6, 1994

Controlling Interests film & video series, organized by film & video curators **Matt Schwonke** & **Julia Dzwonkoski**.

November 1994

4th biannual *Ways in Being Gay* festival, organized by **Margaret Smith**, including the highly-charged gallery exhibition *Amendments*, curated by **Sara Kellner**. **Eli Langer**, a talented & serious young Canadian artist whose drawings were to have appeared in the *Amendments* show, decides on advice of counsel to withdraw the work, fearing it might hurt his case now pending in the Canadian courts. His attempt to sue for return of his paintings confiscated from a Toronto gallery—seized on charges of child pornography—is a nationally celebrated test case of Canada's harsh new censorship laws.

February 2, 1995

HW's video program hosts premiere of three new PSAs "Dispelling the Myths of Welfare," produced by media artist **Jody Lafond** (of MCRR & Ladies of the Lake) & pro-choice activist/writer **Susan Clements** (of Ladies of the Lake & the Pro-Choice Network). Post-produced at HW with funds from **Everywoman's Opportunity Center**, under the auspices of the **Erie County Commission on the Status of Women**.

February 18, 1995

Brian Springer's latest satellite backhaul project *Spin* premieres at HW & is subsequently purchased for broadcast on BBC Channel 4.

September 16-November 4, 1995

Having won his case in the Canadian courts, **Eli Langer** has his first U.S. show at Hallwalls.

EDMUND CARDONI

dered them in the first place, along with the political battles they had taken on in the meantime (or should I say the "mean times"?). Then, in 1989, in the midst of battling on these two fronts (aesthetics and politics, including cultural politics) we were attacked on a third and fourth in quick succession, the one-two punch of censorship and funding cuts, with one directly tied to the other. We'd reached out, all right, and now we were getting our hand slapped. Hard.

And that's where we stand today, not victims—and certainly not victors—but weary soldiers in a culture war that—unlike Vietnam, the stormy war in whose calm wake Hallwalls was born 20 years ago—has actually been declared on the floor of Congress. This is no time to walk away from the battle. Although he may have lulled us briefly into a false sense of security, it's now painfully clear that Clinton couldn't save the NEA (or much else his supporters care about) from its enemies in Congress. Having tried and failed for over five years to censor us, they're moving within months to privatize us out of existence. But we're determined to exist despite them. And to exist uncensored. And to strengthen our ties to the community we live in, as well as to our beleaguered sister spaces in other cities. As public airwaves go silent or are sold to the highest bidder, boarded-up classrooms are converted into prison cells, and public forums for political dissent grow scarcer, alternative spaces like Hallwalls may be among the few public institutions left in any community where critical perspectives can be cultivated, totalitarian certainties challenged, and repressive attitudes resisted, always, however, through art, through that process (laborious or inspired) by which individuals find creative expression for ideas. These principles seem more fundamental to me than those of taste or aesthetics or craft. They are certainly more fundamental than fashion or marketability. Art conceived in any but this fundamentally critical, anti-repressive spirit seems pointless. It is this spirit (more than any single aesthetic direction or political agenda) that has driven Hallwalls for 20 years, and it is my hope for Hallwalls that it is able to sustain this spirit of resistance and creative freedom in the repressive times ahead.

Edmund Cardoni is the current Executive Director of Hallwalls. In his capacity as Literature curator, he edited the two volumes of the fiction anthology Blatant Artifice. He is also a writer and teacher.

MAKING POLITICAL ART, MAKING ART POLITICAL

Although your local major museum does need the money, and while you might enjoy a gift-shop discount and a Chablis-'n'-pate preview of "Pewter Miniatures from Bavaria," expand your aesthetic horizons with an alternative space annual membership instead. Places like Hallwalls in Buffalo, NY, Artists Space in Manhattan, The Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh, Randolph Street Gallery in Chicago, DiverseWorks in Houston, The Contemporary Arts Forum in Santa Barbara and The Capp Street Project in San Francisco are where the artists who drive Jesse Helms nuts get started. Arrive before the police do and see the work in real life, not just photocopied on a Rev. Donald Wildmon handout. (Average price: \$35.)

—excerpt from Newsweek's December 2, 1991 suggestions for holiday shopping

KEVIN NOBLE (visual artist): As the end of [Hallwalls' first] decade approached, stylization and marketing became the dominant concern for many artists. The exploding growth of the art market in 1980 coincided with the coming to power of Ronald Reagan and the conservative agenda of the right wing in this country and in Europe. Art reflected this political, economic, and social change. I remember some intensive soul-searching going on at Hallwalls in the early 1980s as to what was the role of an alternative artist-run center in Buffalo when a major concern in New York was who sold what artwork to which collector and for how much.

Funding sources such as the NEA and the New York State Council on the Arts began to pressure non-profit alternative centers to become more institutionalized and businesslike. Greater emphasis was put on having a Board of Directors that was drawn from the business sector, diminishing the role and influence of the artist at Hallwalls. The ascendancy of the commercial art galleries during the '80s forced the alternative art galleries to examine if they were truly alternative or merely stepping stones to where the real action was: the commercial art market.

With the creation of an international network of artist-run centers during the 1970s, artists had taken some control over their work and how it was presented. In the 1980s, alternative spaces became marginalized as the real power shifted from the artists to the collectors. One of the most powerful of this group of collectors was Charles Saatchi of London-based Saatchi and Saatchi Advertising, which at the time was the largest ad agency in the world. Charles Saatchi and his brother Maurice were contributors to the conservative Tory party, while Saatchi and Saatchi handled the party's advertising account. The economic and social conservatism espoused by the Saatchi brothers was related to the policies of Reaganism in this country, policies which helped make the boom in the art world possible. The individualism and competition-in-the-marketplace promoted by Ronald Reagan and his allies in England replaced the sense of community that had developed among artists in the previous decade. When the bubble burst with the stock market crash of 1987, followed by the real estate market crash, the art market soon crashed, too.

In 1995, on the 20th anniversary of the founding of Hallwalls, the conservatives were once again looking towards the art world—only this time they left their checkbooks at home.



GEORGE HOWELL (*programmer of Hallwalls' first literary series*): We sometimes forget that in the '70s, there was still a trace of grassroots "counter-culture" politics in the air and a lot of artists considered themselves political even if their work only dealt with a change in consciousness and not a clear social/economic agenda or the gender/minority issues of the present moment. Multimedia work had an aura of the political because installations and performance art were about changing the social relation of viewer and artist, and usually pushed a cultural critique. As the old argument went, painting was apolitical and reactionary, even though Charlie Clough argued that painting was about surface and sign, not soul and transcendence.

Around the mid-'80s, as I broke away from alternative arts, there was a lot of grumbling about pluralism, that all that free-form art indicated a lack of coherent direction. Someone else can do a better job of retelling how painting and figuration suddenly reemerged under the guise of neo-expressionism, and how the political-analytical concept of "representation" dominated critical thinking.

I have heard a lot about politics in art over the past decade, but I think the system that was supposed to be showing unshowable art had gotten caught up in the "emerging artist" syndrome. I dropped out of the alternative arts because I was tired of "art stars" and appropriationist art. However, with the Republicans in power, maybe politics in art is going to have to be more down-to-earth and accessible.

BABS CONANT (*political activist and member of "The Ladies of the Lake," a Buffalo-based satirical group*): Oh, the Ladies, the Ladies of the Lake. Lily White Angelbrite and her (ever-pregnant) daughter Pearly White; fanny-pinching Reverend Most High Eric Shun; Baka Beta Pie, the Moral Sorority; the cheer-leading nun; Holly's Housekeeping Hints; Dr. Edwina Smythe Featheringstone from the Immaculate Conception School of Biology; the Sisterhood of Saint Fallopia; Marilyn Quayle . . .

The Ladies had a rather varied relationship (affair?) with Hallwalls. Jody Lafond, our video-taper and frequent performer, was on staff part-time there for most of our active years; she rented their equipment [and that of Squeaky Wheel] to tape our shows and video productions. In May 1990, the Ladies mounted (dear me!) a full-length performance in The Vault, ending with the sales-pitch video, "Great Gobs O' Country Gold." Later that year, on opening night of the first Ways In Being Gay Festival, we did a street action outside the downtown location, in which the Reverend warned patrons against entering the Den of Iniquity, and Mrs. Erin Go Braugh opined that all homosexuals should be eliminated—except, of course, her hairdresser. Finally, when the Abortion Project art show opened at Hallwalls in early 1992, the Ladies participated in a panel discussion about political satire.

Beyond the support of equipment and space, Hallwalls' staff found ways to (actually) take us seriously as an enterprise. We followed Ron Ehmke's suggestion, applied to the Cleveland Performance Art Festival, and were accepted—which is how we learned we were "performance artists." In March 1992, a dozen Ladies drove west for a multimedia extravaganza, our own performance scheduled between a video "meditation" on nuclear war by a Japanese artist and an autobiographical work by Kate Bornstein, a transsexual lesbian. Later, Ed Cardoni suggested that we apply for NEA funds [an NEA/Rockefeller Foundation Interarts Regrant] and again we succeeded. (Yes, Jesse, we started work on a Best-of-the-Ladies video.)

The Ladies are proud (to the extent that Ladies are allowed by their husbands to be proud) to be among the many groups and individuals blessed by the artistic and material encouragement of Hallwalls. Through changing political climates, shrinking and expanding financial times and the internationalization of artistic exchange, Hallwalls has been a constant and often courageous exemplar of diversity and experimentation in creative effort.

KATHE BURKHART (visual artist and visiting curator): I participated in two shows at Hallwalls: a painting group show, *Vulgar Realism*, in 1989, and *The Abortion Project* in 1992. The latter labor-intensive installation involved much more time spent on the site at Hallwalls, and demanded a great deal from the staff, both technically and otherwise. They were wonderful, and professional. I stayed in the homes of [Jackie Felix and Sara Kellner.] Bitch Curator-in-Training.

I think Chrysanne [Stathacos], my collaborator, would agree that *The Abortion Project* looked beautiful at Hallwalls. We were very pleased to be able to agitate through art at a very politically charged time with Randall Terry of Operation Rescue [staging a nationally publicized "Spring of Life" demonstration] in Buffalo. The proof of the success of our message came in many ways, from cooperation with sundry political groups and volunteers to the personal stories of individual signatories [women who signed the gallery wall attesting that they had had an abortion], to audience and critical appreciation.

But the protesters outside on the frozen winter streets with their color blowups of fetuses really let us know how important it was for this work to be done the moment we did it.

Hallwalls made it possible.

FRANK MOORE (performance artist): Hallwalls has been one of the shrinking few established galleries to show controversial art, to give a home and freedom to cutting-edge art. Moreover, they give this freedom with passion. I remember after I had done my all-night audience-participation ritual performance, *Journey to Lila*, at Pyramid Art Center in Rochester after doing it at Hallwalls the night before, Ron Ehmke called the Pyramid....not to find out how many people came or "how well it was received." The things Ron wanted to know were: how many people took their clothes off, how many freaked out, how far did the performance go into taboo areas. In other words, these two galleries had a very healthy rivalry about which one had created the best environment for challenging art.

I am not stupid enough to say who I thought won this rivalry. But both organizations are running against the current trend of trying to package performance as entertainment, as off-beat cabaret. Some performance is entertaining. Some performance is cabaret. That is great. But when you try to package performance into a neat cabaret format, to make per-

formance acceptable and profitable, it becomes a hip form of nightclub-watching or groovy TV-watching. If you limit performance in time and space for acceptability, it stops being performance. When galleries dictate that performances must fit the 3-minute, 5-minute, 30-minute, hour, 90-minute time frame that the corporate mass media has trained us in, they are just reinforcing that training.

Instead of trying to shape the art it hosts, Hallwalls creates an environment in which the art is free to perform its dreaming function. Performance, like any avant-garde art, is the way society dreams; it is the way society expands its freedom, explores the forbidden in safety, loosens up. Society needs its dream art, just as an individual needs to dream or will go insane. Our moral-majority society, bent on going backwards into the violent blank rigidity of a censored mind, needs taboo-breaking dreams to get back to freedom. Performance is perfectly suited for this dream role. At the present time, our society is at a fork in its growth. It can go deeper into high-tech impersonal isolation, or it can rediscover the magic that happens when physical and emotional humans actively and directly link up with one another. Art can either just follow society, just recording the trends, or it can take a pathbreaker role. I think this pathbreaker art is what Hallwalls gives possibility to.



Frank Moore performance, June 2, 1989.
Poster: Michael Labash

EMANUEL FRIED (*novelist and playwright*): What I have especially appreciated about Hallwalls is that at a time when I was considered politically objectionable by some people in this community, including a local writing group which disinvested me from participating in their organization after one of their members had personally urged me to become a part of their group—I appreciated that Hallwalls, fully aware that I was and am on the Left, invited me to participate in some of its activities. We all know that Hallwalls is one of the leading organizations in this area (and far beyond this area) in risking to challenge form in the arts, but it has been very gratifying to me that in my case Hallwalls was willing to risk challenging content and the personal presence of someone like myself who at the time was not acceptable in many other quarters in this city. That counts a lot for me in judging the value of this organization to its community.

JANET SORENSON (*Professor of English, Indiana University; media critic and frequent audience member*): While the William Bennets of this world bemoan the lack of "cultural literacy" in America, and their friends in the legislatures implement arts funding cuts, the under-funded Hallwalls has always struck me as a true site of cultural learning. I say this knowing that terms such as "culture" and "literacy" are hotly contested. I also say it believing that such struggles over meaning can be both a reflection and agent of social change.

If we accept, as Raymond Williams argued, that culture is ordinary, then we might define cultures as ways of being in the world. To be literate in cultures means, in part, to be aware of diversity, of the wide range of ways of being in the world. Hallwalls has always offered opportunities for facilitating that awareness. Cultural literacy might also mean the ability to read culture—especially to analyze, interpret, and, ideally, respond to (and resist) the dominant culture: the conventional yet "naturalized" way of being in the world. While awareness of diversity is an important place to start that process, it is only a start.

Cultural literacy only ever has any meaning when it moves beyond the sphere of consumption and begins to take on questions of production. This proposition always seemed intuitive, even obvious to me in my more overtly political work. And it was, of course, a basic tenet in the composition teaching I did while I lived in Buffalo. My experiences at Hallwalls, however, particularly with the video program, taught me to understand the importance of cultural production to cultural literacy as well.

While I'm not quite comfortable with the conversion-narrative format of this experience, the recognition that resistance doesn't end with a subversive reading of a cultural text was an important one for me—uncomfortably ensconced in the academy as I was. There the textual encounter often begins and ends with a response to, or consumption of, someone else's text. The video program, with its emphasis on production communities, political video intervention, and sponsored residencies, highlights the critical position of production. Production over and above a slick visual experience, production in the place of mere consumption.

If Barbara Bush wants us to become a nation of readers, Chris Hill and Barb Latanzi have asked us to become a nation of makers. Highlighting alternative production—especially in the Video Witnesses Festivals—not only gives a voice to diversity and alternative ways of being in the world, it also helps us redefine what it means to be culturally literate. That is an important step in a battle that is not soon to end.



Armin Heurich, still from "Human Beat Box," made for Hallwalls' 1985 video series *Political Messages: A Minute of Your Time*. Hallwalls postcard, 1985.

TONY GRAJEDA (*scholar and frequent audience member*): Lest we get carried away celebrating the 20th anniversary of Hallwalls, bear in mind that its red-letter year officially coincided with the nightmare that was the 1994 elections. (Marking 20 years of Hallwalls approaches an exercise in nostalgia if, by over-valorizing its significant role in the history of postmodern culture, we betray the center's unwavering commitment to contemporary art; to commemorate the altogether astonishing past of Hallwalls at the expense of an unfulfilled present gives the mistaken impression that the art space's best years are behind it.) Some comfort resides in the notion of legitimization crisis: less than 40 per cent of eligible voters took part in the electoral process, thereby invoking if only temporarily Baudrillard's configuration of the Silent Majorities. His impact on the art world may have long since passed, but elsewhere Baudrillard's less fashionable observations at least remind us of this apparent great refusal by so many to participate in, and thus legitimize, an increasingly bankrupt political system. Mandate, what mandate? Still, someone will rule. (Imagine for one moment Newt "Let them eat values" Gingrich at the helm.) No doubt it's a symptom of our desperation to consider ourselves fortunate (as far as Hallwalls and Western New York are concerned) if Jack Kemp gets the nod in '96, since the former homeboy now appears downright liberal given how far to the right the GOP has stationed itself.

This brings us to what might be perceived as a double paradox inhering to the cultural politics of art in America and more specifically Hallwalls. For how could it be that Hallwalls actually flourished, if not financially then at least artistically, during the dreaded Reagan era? (While not directly benefitting economically from the wild deficit spending of Reaganomics, Hallwalls' most ambitious period did coincide with the Van Gogh effect—the speculative fever of the art world in the '80s and the spectacular ascension of the art object as investment of choice for venture capitalists.) Hostility to the arts from the right (Helms, fundamentalist Christians, Cincinnati) or conservative agendas from within' (Frohnemeyer's reign at the NEA) somehow produced, paradoxically enough, a highly charged environment in which a great deal of work actively sought to challenge the putative reality principle of the '80s. And what transpired in this period, one could argue, included the most consistently adventurous programming to ever take place at Hallwalls. The terrain upon which the culture wars have been raging has steadily shifted away from the possibilities for critical work through publicly funded channels and toward the corporate takeover of the public sector and the privatization of most forms of cultural production. This process of reduced government support (or what passes for it) and the corporatization effect—subjecting what Cornel West calls cultural workers to the logic of market imperatives—this process instantiates difficult if not troubling circumstances, not the least of which involves self-censorship. Herbert Marcuse's notion of repressive tolerance notwithstanding, corporate funding of the arts raises the stakes on a recipient's relationship to those who write the checks and pay the bills. What's dangerous here is not only the potential for a chilling effect (fear of offending one's sponsors) but, moreover, the likelihood of a retreat from adversarial art, justified by parading under the banner of artistic autonomy. Of course the ideology of aesthetic formalism was central to modernism, as was radical experimentation crucial to the historical avant-garde. What looms as surprising about this faith in cultural and political radicality, in which the belief that extreme formal innovation would necessarily lead to political innovation, is the extent to which this faith inherited from the avant-garde still persists.

Meanwhile, the contemporary discourse of the anti-aesthetic, whereby art is subordinated to political categories (or what some consider excessive moralizing), sets its own prohibition upon anything failing the test of purely functional or utilitarian treatments of artistic activity. Ironically, this rendering of art as instrumental is precisely co-extensive with the right wing agenda against "degenerate" art and the supposed cultural decline of America. Indeed, the separation of these two principles—the desire for autonomy and the drive for instrumentalization—produces a hierarchical ranking in which one or the other inevitably takes precedence. The division itself limits our chances for resolving the current struggle for cultural legitimization. What would be our chances, then, with neither an ideology of the aesthetic nor an insistence on the subordination to politics but, rather, with a dialectical relation between both realms, whereby each is irreducible to the other?

The paradox of cultural production for the time being, played out within and against an authoritarian social climate and reactionary political hegemony that nevertheless sets the stage for the development (while circumscribing the vitality) of inspired and compelling artistic and cultural activity, might be constitutive to the dialectics of postmodern culture. At any rate, the effectiveness (be it pleasure, humor or anger, critical responsiveness or tired indifference) of such dissident work so often presented at Hallwalls over the last several years cannot be measured. But then again, dare we imagine how things would be without such a place?



Mike Glier: *Ten Years*, 1988, installation view. (See "Exhibitions" chapter.)

CHARLES WRIGHT (*Exhibitions Curator, 1989-91*): Hallwalls taught me the dangers of liberalist thinking. It's an extreme notion of economic and social oppression. I'd never seen anything like it in my life; it's this ivory tower of victims.

.... I never understood this whole business suit thing. I used to get dressed up to go to staff meetings just to freak everybody out. For a politic to be based on those types of things is ... It was a strange kind of attitude. I learned from Hallwalls that that form of political activity is useless, it's ineffectual

Excerpted from an interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1995.

January 1995

Dear Hallwalls staff,

Thanks very much for being present in this city (I resist saying: thanks for your presence). I am a philosophy instructor and magician (cards), and I have benefitted greatly over the years from hearing the various degrees of scorn heaped upon you by the local yahoos. I think it's beyond courage for you guys, so I won't thank you for that. You are managing a reflection of the times. This doesn't (despite the wishes of some, etc.) come automatically or easily. In a bar last night I heard ugly anti-gay (drunken) eruptions. A very so-called liberal atmosphere: the same BS is available on the radio and in the supermarket. I'm sure you know all about the nastiness, etc. But thanks for making my life easier. Incendiary (racist/sexist) rhetoric is never OK.

Yours truly,
Eugene Beltrami, Jr.

KEVIN J. HOSEY (*Buffalo-based writer and frequent audience member*): One of the strongest memories I have of Hallwalls is [the Buffalo-based band] Towpath performing there with two other noise acts in 1993, when one member of the group, during a particularly destructive portion of the show, grabbed an unoccupied chair from the audience area and started to throw it into a pile of items onstage. Executive Director Edmund Cardoni yelled "No!" grabbed and stopped the person from doing so, and the show soon ended. I, like others, was pissed then for the stoppage, and I still am now. If the contradictions and difficulties of creating, performing, and presenting art at Hallwalls could have been better shown in the last few years, I don't know how.

Except where otherwise noted, texts in this section were written for this publication.

BEHIND THE SCENES

THE STAFF SPEAKS



Bill Currie, video still, 1985

KIRSTEN: You will see what I see and how I see it. And I will see what you see and if my world falls apart before my eyes, your world will fall apart before your eyes and we will both see the same and whatever is there we will both or all three see together. Our six eyes will be one eye. We'll all be one eye, see out of one eye. Whether it is deliberate or not, it is just one eye and we will all see out of it. You're only part of a machine, our machine, and because you are part of it, we'll all work together whether you want to or not. We will all see the same things together.

—John Jesurun, text excerpt from *White Water*, reprinted in *Ojo Caliente*, an artist's book published by Hallwalls in conjunction with Jesurun's installation, 1988

LINDA CATHCART, *catalogue essay*, *Hallwalls: Five Years, 1980*: Today Hallwalls is made up of different faces but still has the same vigor [as in its early years]. There are the same worries and cares: where is the money coming from to fix the heating system, the rent is going up, the press has broken down—the Hallwalls hard core now includes a printer, Ann Rosen, who brought along her press. It was impossible to know someone deeply involved in Hallwalls and not become so yourself; as you can see, it was a 24-hour job. If you were in love with someone there you'd better join up—find a niche or find another friend. Love brought more new faces to Hallwalls than art I'm sometimes afraid. But there were many niches to fill and people could settle into them—sometimes forever, or at least until they moved to New York, or sometimes for a short time and later perhaps the responsibility would be given to a person more interested; it might even evolve out of existence for good or for a while. ... I got a letter about a month ago advising me of my duties as advisor and keeping me up to date, and it was signed "Diane Bertolo, Coordinator of Exhibitions/Floor sweeper/Etc."

CLAUDIA GOULD (*Exhibitions Curator, 1982-83*): I found out about Hallwalls through different people. I was an intern at Artists Space in '81; I was in graduate school. What happened was, Anne Turyn, an artist I knew, said Hallwalls was looking for a curator. She was on the board, and asked if I would be interested. It would be my first opportunity to really curate, to really do stuff, so I left New York for Buffalo. Bill Currie was the director at the time. It was my first curating job; it paid \$1,000 a year, there were no health benefits, and we didn't get paid during the summer. But when I look back upon it now, I was so eager and happy to be there. ... I didn't like Buffalo. I think it's hard for someone who's a New Yorker; it was hard for me to acclimate. Also, it was hard for me to meet other people. I liked metropolitan living. Downtown was all boarded up.

Excerpted from a 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.



Tony Billoni backstage with Sun Ra, 1991. Photo: Ed Sobala

TONY BILLONI (*Performance Curator, 1982-83*): I always remember Bill [Currie] as having this spirit that no one could ever be in the wrong. I guess that's about the best feeling that anyone could ever have about something. I booked a couple of real dogs, and he just sort of took me aside and said, "You know, we're just trying to do things that are really stunning. Just keep looking for the great..." [laughs] What an odd thing to say!

This and subsequent quotes excerpted from a 1995 interview with Ronald Ehmke.

GARY NICKARD (*Director of CEPA, 1982-88; member of the punk band The Vores*): The Vores were kind of the house band for CEPA and Hallwalls. The group started at CEPA: Biff [Henrich] was director, I had become a member when it was on Main at Utica, [CEPA staffer and Hallwalls performance curator] Dave Kulik was a photography grad student. The first gig we played was Charlie Clough's going away party when he left for NYC around '78, in the upstairs apartment at Hallwalls on Essex Street. After that, if there was a benefit to be done or anything like that, the Vores were part of it. Dave could really sell a song—when he left, the band was doomed; we were never able to replace him. The very last gig we played was in Hallwalls' new space in 1982, right before I became the director of CEPA.

This and subsequent quote excerpted from a 1995 phone interview with Ronald Ehmke.

ROBIN DODDS (*Exhibitions Curator, 1983-85*): [The aftermath of the 1983 installation by the collective TODT] was the nadir of my work at Hallwalls. They had painted the gallery battleship gray and ripped all these big holes in the wall. There was a huge gray gallery with all these holes in the wall. [For the season's next exhibition,] Mike Kelley told me that he would be there and that he needed a perfectly clean gallery with two days to set up. And one night these volunteers came in [to repaint the gallery], and they just left. They came in and saw what we had to do, and they did it for about 30 minutes or an hour, and then they just picked up their stuff and left. I don't know how we did it, but I was up all night long; I was up 24 hours painting this gallery again and again and again, and in the middle of it, about 1 in the morning, Bill Currie comes in. He had a grant he had to finish, the final report. So at 2 I said to Bill, I'll do the report if you come in and paint the gallery. I was annoyed with him, even though he's such a sweet guy. And then Mike Kelley walks in and he looks at the gallery and he leaves and I didn't see him all day. After I had been up all night.

Excerpted from a 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

TONY BILLONI: One big difference between the people who worked at Hallwalls in the '70s and the ones who worked there in the '80s [is that] the people who founded the place went out and made names for themselves as artists. In the '80s, it was people who were tangentially involved [who left Buffalo and achieved recognition for their art or music]; many of the people that programmed kept being programmers, or became producers, and built reputations based on that. But the people we've touched, a lot of them have gone on to do things.

CATHERINE HOWE (*Exhibitions Curator, 1985-89*): In a way, I'm the stereotypical Hallwalls success story, because I was a local artist, fairly naive with a lot of energy and a lot of desire, and I grew through [working] there into a much more world-wise, peoplewise, artwise person who moved to New York, and now I'm a practicing artist. I'm not as successful as Robert Longo, but these aren't the '80s, either.

I never intended to be a curator, a professional curator. I just knew that I wanted to be an artist desperately and that I had a lot more to learn. I didn't think that what was around me in Buffalo was all there was. I wanted to find a way to get at more, but I was still a very local girl and I wasn't ready to take the big plunge and reject everything in Buffalo. So I was really lucky. It was the perfect opportunity for me. ... I took to being an organizer really naturally. I'm a controlling person. I like to take on a lot of responsibility because it keeps me from thinking too much. My brain is kind of in a whirl usually.

When Bill Currie offered me the position in his kitchen with his kid who had jelly on his face, my jaw dropped open. Comparing myself with Robin Dodds—in my mind she was so sophisticated and so knowledgeable, and I couldn't believe they were giving me this thing with this incredible history and incredible potential. I did feel the burden and the responsibility; I thought, Oh my god, how am I going to fake this? But I did it through going to New York a lot and reading a lot and talking to people a lot, just keeping my mouth shut the first year or so and listening to what other people said.

I was going to New York about once a month. It was when People Express had, like, 29 dollar flights; they'd push a shopping cart down the aisle and you'd throw your money in. It made it very possible for the Hallwalls staff to go back and forth. I was sleeping on Avenue D, got my first cockroach on my face in the morning. And when I [visited New York], people didn't know I was the girl from Buffalo, because Hallwalls back then had a really big reputation. Right now people don't really know about it so much, but back then the Robert Longo legacy thing was still in effect. I didn't have to tell people, "Well I'm 23 and I'm from Buffalo and I don't know a goddamn thing." I would just sort of try to dress in a lot of black, and it worked: after about two years I believed it. [laughs] ... There's always a trail that leads to somebody who says "Oh, you should call this person." I was never afraid that if I didn't know something I couldn't find it out from somebody else.

I was very insecure about being both an artist and a curator, because people in the '80s didn't understand that. You were either an artist or you were a curator there to help them. This idea about being colleagues together, caring and sharing: it was a tough role to play. Fairly soon, about midway through my tenure, it became clear that I had to become either an artist or a non-profit person. And I knew that I could be a good non-profit person. I seemed to be successful in grant writing; I'd gotten very good grants for my program. I seemed to be successful in my organization of shows ... but there was no choice for me. The choice had already been made.

Excerpted from a 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

GAIL NICHOLSON (*Various positions, CEPA Gallery, 1984-present*): When I moved to Buffalo from Syracuse in 1980 or 81, I had never worked in a non-profit before; I was just starting school as an undergraduate in the art department at UB. Either Bob Collignon liked me, or I had a big mouth—that wouldn't have hurt around here—so he told me that Dan Levine's job at CEPA was open. Cathy Howe and I both applied for it, and we both had to come in and take typing tests for Gary (Nickard). He'd stand there and give us things to type, and then we'd type them. I don't know why. I didn't know how to type, either, and as it turns out I never had to type anything for anyone, anyway. I guess I did better on the test than Cathy (who subsequently became Exhibitions Curator at Hallwalls), because I started out helping hang shows, dealing with book sales, and organizing the bus show.

This and subsequent quote excerpted from a 1995 interview with Ronald Ehmke.

ALAN SONDHEIM

The Idiot

I was an *idiot* at Hallwalls. I felt I didn't fit in. The current director at the time constantly denigrated me before the staff. At one point she insisted that I wanted to go to Toronto on personal business and was using Hallwalls as an excuse. In front of everyone. Ed Cardoni circulated a letter against me. I detected, rightly or wrongly, racism on the part of some curators now long since gone. I ran into the bitterest black/white divisions I had ever seen in any arts community, in Buffalo. At least those were changing by the time I left.

I was hired as artistic director and spent most of the time depressed and working on the job description, which no one could agree on. I lost interest in the daily functioning of the organization when it became clear that I wouldn't be able to affect anything, and that the curators were simply not listening to my suggestions. In spite of my job title, there was no reason they should have listened. I also wasn't able to fit in with any of them—on this level, it was difficult for an outsider. Their interrelationships seemed overly complicated to me, and, in a couple of cases, self-serving. But not any of the current company whatsoever.

I also felt odd as a Jew, but this is my own personal problem. Buffalo seemed so dark and Catholic; it also seemed to be the turf of a number of faculty members from the surrounding colleges, and I felt there was no room for me whatsoever. My response was totally neurotic, upping the odds, gazing into space. I was also, to be sure, in an absolutely catastrophic personal relationship that contributed to the mess. I was an idiot in every way.

I always admired, and still do, the film and video curating, the literary curating, the performance curating. I got to see Holly Hughes. But I couldn't fit into any of this; it was CEPA or Squeaky Wheel that provided whatever cultural home I had. And I was especially disappointed in the visual arts programming, which had almost no outreach, no ties to the local community. I gather that's changed somewhat.

In fact I think all of the above is simply the result of mememememe being the wrong person at the wrong time. I'm too idiotic, too neurotic. I couldn't make heads or tails of things. I couldn't fight back against rumor, innuendo, and the director's trying to undercut me both personally and professionally. I did love the Falls, though.

I'm glad to see that everything's going on-line. That's the way of the future. Contemporary art spaces have generated their own ideological positioning, and that's harmful. They're not open the way they used to be. In New York, almost all the challenging shows are from the commercial galleries now, Exit Art an exception. What's this all about?

I've become soured by the infighting in the artworld, by the way. Most art is atavistic, memories of passed grandeur, or reworking what more commercial media can do better. I really believe this. It's time to move on. Can I? I don't know. I'm an idiot.

Writer/media artist/educator Alan Sondheim served as Hallwalls' Artistic Director, 1987-88. His comments here are excerpted from a 1994 statement written for this volume.

GAIL NICHOLSON: The wall between the so-called library and the Hallwalls and CEPA offices was not finished at the top, so we ended up hearing more than we might have wanted. There was a lot more yelling at Hallwalls than at CEPA! [laughs] Maybe that's just because there were more personalities there. (At CEPA, if we yelled once, we got it out of our systems.) There were also lots of people with keys—you never knew if they were on the Hallwalls staff, or visiting artists, or what—and a lot of people cut through our office to get to Hallwalls.



GARY NICKARD: There were plenty of personality clashes between the two organizations; I'll take responsibility for some of that. Had we not been under so much pressure, things would have worked out in a much more amiable fashion. The most notorious flare-up happened the time (photographer) Tseng Kwong Chi came up and did all these photos of himself in front of various well-known monuments. He wanted to paint the CEPA wall bright red; it was a very Chinese thing to do. The Hallwalls show opening at the same time was by Mike Roddy and Gary Morehead; very painterly, very much painting-about-painting. And the artists threw a major shit fit! They went ballistic about the red wall, even though it was clearly in CEPA's space; we had a gallery map which spelled out what space belonged to which organization. Their own work was primarily green, they said, and they complained that the red wall was leaving an afterimage. They even started to take their own work down in protest; the staffs of both organizations took sides. I thought this threat of "retinal interference" was an absolutely preposterous ideal. It was as a direct result of that that Bill Currie built a wall dividing the two spaces, which went up literally overnight; I came to call it the "Berlin Wall."

JODY LAFOND: Before there was a window in the Video Editing Suite, you could hear everything going on in Hallwalls' office. It was always very noisy. I'd be working in the suite and overhear Steve Gallagher planning to take over the world. Then I'd go over to CEPA, and Gail and Gary Nickard would be there, and it was so peaceful there. Laid back. Saner. Friendlier! I used to think of Hallwalls as the United States, and CEPA as Canada: the quiet neighbor.

Media artist Jody Lafond, whose work has been shown often at Hallwalls, was on staff as Artwaves producer from 1990-91. Her comments here and below are excerpted from a 1995 interview with Ronald Ehmske.

MATTHEW SCHWONKE (CEPA Director of Education, 1993-present/Hallwalls Film Curator, 1994-95): In many ways, Hallwalls and CEPA are similar, almost sibling organizations, with a common history and development, and, especially in the early days, several common staff and board members. (Not long ago I thought I was one of very few people to have worked at both places, while early documents point to very different circumstances.)

The two organizations are, however, in terms of style, approach, and personnel, very clearly the Bart and Lisa Simpson of the Buffalo art world. This is not a critique of the quality of programming at either organization, but rather an analogy based upon their *modus operandi*. Hallwalls is the quintessential Bart, with its (ongoing) tumultuous history, a chaotic and disorganized office and physical space, and its perceived (by politicians, religious fanatics, funders, etc.) bad behavior. Enjoying more visibility and attention than its sister organization, Hallwalls/Bart has continually been embroiled in controversy and bedlam. CEPA embodies all of Lisa: her composure, altruism, and contemplative musings.

Hallwalls was started by people who felt dissatisfied with their formal education—as is Bart—and looked for an alternative venue to discuss, produce, and program their work, and it has always accommodated those who have dropped out of school, or never finished their dissertations, or put their art "careers" ahead of their education. In contrast, CEPA, like Lisa, has always had close connections and alliances with academia, especially the University at Buffalo; one of the gallery's early locations was across the street from UB's Main Street Campus.

Lisa/CEPA seems to go quietly and methodically along on its business, and then there's Bart/Hallwalls, photocopying its butt, mooning the Australians, or spray painting epitaphs about Principal Skinner (the NEA in this analogy?) on the school wall, all the while relishing in and defending its right to do so.

Just like any siblings, especially like Bart and Lisa, they have had their differences, as well as moments of cooperation and collaboration. Even though the two organizations are spatially and metaphysically separated more than ever now, and I am the only shared staff member in recent years, one can still find remnants of their closely intertwined past. I'm still discovering staplers, tape dispensers, and other office and gallery materials in the Hallwalls office that have "CEPA" written on them, and vice-versa. Some local press still occasionally get the places confused, thinking they're part of the same entity. Hallwalls audiences sometimes still show up at CEPA at 700 Main, looking for the performance or video screening that's happening three miles up the street.

Excerpted from a 1995 text written for this publication.

MARIA VENUTO:
Anxieties of a Techie

I am alone at night working in the editing suite at Hallwalls. It's very late. No one else is around. I hear a noise outside the suite; I stop the tape and listen. There's a creaking sound coming from the back of the gallery: the sound of footsteps. I run out the door and down the stairs to the second floor, through the hallway and into the Vault. I hear someone say, "So this is your lighting system? Ha!" To my horror, it's that ornery stage manager with the spicy name: Rosemary? Saffron? Turmeric? Arsenic! She's barking orders at me as she reclines on a chair smoking a cigarette. I leap into the tech booth. There's a repetitive clack-clacking noise coming from the projection cubicle. I slide open the door, and reams of film spill over me. I look over and see the jammed take-up reel, film flying out of the projector and onto the floor. I make my way through the mounds of footage and begin winding it up, but there's so much of it.

Next thing I know there's a parturient performer with a nasty case of careerism yelling at me. Nothing is right, it's all wrong. Any bit of enjoyment that might be had in preparing for the performance is squeezed out by her barrage of insults. I turn my back and am greeted by a filmmaker who has something to show me. He pulls out some snapshots of a man who just killed himself. I am

at a loss for a reaction but sense that these images will be etched on my brain indefinitely (even though I am somewhat suspicious of their authenticity).

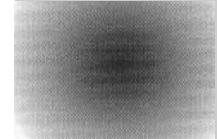
Suddenly the Vault is full of people, some naked, some not. I'm supposed to videotape the impending event; the artist has requested that I take off all my clothes while documenting the performance, in keeping with the spirit of the piece. Hey, I haven't even done that for my own art. I feel the blood rushing to my face when my heroic colleague Paul steps in and volunteers to bear it all while I get to run slides and sound perched in the safety of the tech booth.

That crisis is over but another one begins as I see the video projector coming loose from the ceiling. I run to the curtained-off storage area in search of a ladder—but there's so much stuff I can't move. Finally I see one. I grab it, throw it open below the projector, and run up the ladder. In an Atlas-like gesture I attempt to hold the projector in place. The ladder wobbles and shakes, it twists and topples, I come tumbling down, falling and falling. When I wake up I'm in my bed, my alarm blaring. It's 10:30 A.M. Tuesday and I'm late for another Hallwalls staff meeting.

Media artist Maria Venuto was Hallwalls' Technical Director from 1990-92. The text above was written for this publication.

EILEEN SULLIVAN: For years I had admired CEPA—I'd heard about it from my professors, I'd been there many times—so I went in, looking for a job, or to volunteer, intern, anything. But they turned me away! I figured since I was downtown anyway, I'd stop next door at Hallwalls. I came in and Elnora [Banks, Administrative Assistant/Office Manager, 1988-91] put me to work right away. In no time she left and I ended up with her job. The staff bemoaned her absence for months; there were signs all over the office saying, "Goodbye, Elnora, you can never be replaced." Ed [Cardoni, Executive Director] was rude to me that very first day, but by Christmas we were drinking rum together. He was the only staff member who would sing Christmas carols with me.

Visual artist Eileen Sullivan served as Hallwalls' Administrative Manager from 1991 to 1993. Her comments here are excerpted from an informal conversation with Ronald Ehmke during the hanging of the 1995 Hallwalls retrospective exhibition at the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, where she worked after leaving Hallwalls.

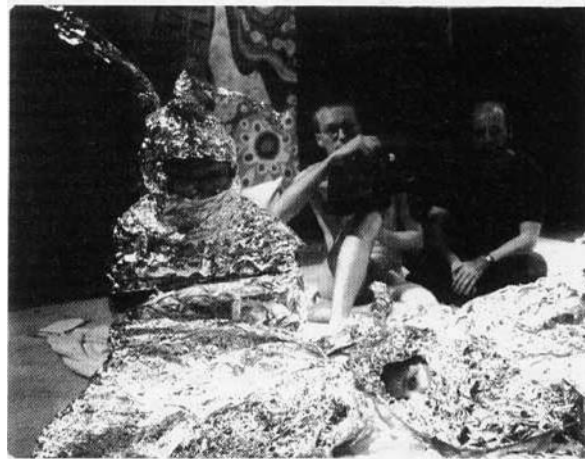


PAUL DICKINSON

Job Description, 1988-90

Move video gear down to the Vault from the Viewing Room. Return gear to Viewing Room. Repeat daily. Pick up slide projectors. Drop off slide projectors. Change the Vault from a theater to a nightclub in 30 minutes. Maintain the duct-tape ball. (Stats: '88-'89 season: 12 3/4" dia.; '89-'90 season: 14" dia.) Hear the sound of beer bottles kicked over during performances. Hear Alex growling as she sets up the bar in the Vault. (At first I find it alarming: "What's she so pissed off about?" Later, I pick it up as a kind of internal cleansing habit.) See Maria in the crow's nest. Deal with Sam Strange. Find Richard Wicka's photographs. (They turn up everywhere. My personal favorite is the one of me, Ron, and Alex where they're wrapped in aluminum foil.) Watch Tony Conrad protest LaMonte Young. Watch Terry Klein get flayed alive. (Those screams will haunt me to my dying day.) Watch Ron and Jürgen dance under the mirror ball. Try to get a phone on a Tuesday. Wonder whose week it is to clean the office. Chat with gruff but lovable Rick, the elevator operator. Videotape Frank Moore & Co. in the nude. Maintain slide library. Clean up glow-in-the-dark paint. Clean up stage blood. Clean up after the bubble machine. Clean up acids & household cleansers. Find a man with a hairy back for Dale Hoyt to shave. Catch up on internal folklore. Other duties as assigned.

Media artist Paul Dickinson was Hallwalls' Technical Director from 1988-90. His comments here were written for this volume.



Richard Wicka, *Self-Portrait Photo Series*, 1989.

L-R: Ronald Ehmke, Paul Dickinson, Alex Gelencser, Richard Wicka

JODY LAFOND: I remember the first time I had to stay overnight at Hallwalls. I was editing a tape, and [video editing suite coordinator] Julie Zando had to lock me in for the night. From that night on, when I was alone, I went rummaging around. I wasn't looking for secrets, I was looking for food. Chris Hill usually had Fig Newtons and peanuts. Eventually I started raiding the refrigerator at CEPA. It was great when somebody had a birthday, because there would always be a cake lying around. One night I hit paydirt: somebody had left behind half of a huge wheel of brie! During the time Tony Conrad and I were editing *The News Diaries*, there was a benefit going on and caterers had set up a kitchen in the office. We ended up stealing a couple of bottles of wine. Shortly after that the budget crunch was revealed, and I felt really bad about what we had done. (I still feel bad about it.) Every morning at 7, McDonald's would open; I'd get an Egg McMuffin and watch the sun rise from the office. I'd feel horrible: I'd been there all night and hadn't done anything but steal food.

KILISSA McGOLDRICK: I began my tour of duty as Hallwalls' ace Administrative Manager and Den Mother in the summer of 1993. I'll never forget the lean, hungry looks of the curators during my interview when they took me out for coffee on Main Street. "Well," I stammered, "I only dressed up in the interview suit to... to ... show you I could do it..." By their haggard faces and their wrinkled shirts, I could see this would be a strictly casual, possibly sleepless work environment.

"You're familiar with the unemployment line?" they wanted to know. "Good. We're all about to be laid off; you'll have to fill out the paperwork. Do you pay your bills on time at home? OK, well at Hallwalls, you see, when the electric company calls, just tell them you're new here, you never got that letter, please send a copy of the invoice, the dog ate it, we're a non-profit organization, OUR GRANTS HAVEN'T COME IN YET. Whatever you do, don't let them break you." They grilled me for an hour. They practically sent me in for a psychology test to determine if I was crazy for actually wanting to work at Hallwalls.

And I did want to work there. Hallwalls had always held an attraction for me from my first visits there 10 years earlier for concerts by Jane Ira Bloom and Yvar Mikhashoff, when I was an undergraduate music student at UB. Later, I remember going to films in the Vault: a great place to see punk hairdos, velvet-clad sex vixens, avant-garde intellectuals, New York types, industrial mutants. Hallwalls was the place you would go to if you were in the know—if you knew what it was, where to park, and how to find the door.

After school I started focusing my life around writing music, learning to play the guitar, trying to find a job that I could support myself on, scraping together change for the bus, sharing an apartment with [Hallwalls' Video Editing Coordinator] Ellen Spiro, riding my bike to sing at the Jazz Jams at Nietzsche's, the Blue Note, and the Colored Musicians Club. I had learned about graphic design and typesetting at UB, so I got myself a (long) series of jobs in printing. Boring—but for an *artiste* it can be good to have a no-brain job so you can leave at 4:30 to work on your *arte*. I wrote a lot of songs, I went through a few bands, I got into African drumming, I started teaching kids, I became ... a Jazzabel.

For some bizarre reason, my fellow Jazzabel, Cathy Carfagna, and I were invited to play a song in a production at Hallwalls: *Elton John, the Rock Opera* [1990]. I used to think the place was inaccessible to me as an artist (since I was going through a Hank Williams phase at the time), but there I was, in a gold lamé jacket and huge sunglasses. After that came a "Jazzabels in Honky Tonk Hell" concert for "Worst Thursday" and a panel discussion on women songwriters during the "Beyond Ginger" performance festival. It's not that I ever thought of myself as a "performance artist," but that's just where we seemed to have an inroad to the Hallwalls scene—which was a relief from the bars. The Jazzabels didn't know exactly what we would turn out to be, so we tried a lot of things in our first year or two. It was great to have a place to be encouraged to stretch it even farther, to the ridiculous.

Back to the summer of '93. I did get the job, and everyone else really was laid off, including Ed Cardoni, the director. There I was, working ten hours a week in a deserted office, teaching at a children's summer arts program in the mornings, and finishing up the recording of a Jazzabels CD at night. There was a lot to learn, and I felt like the (laid off) staff of Hallwalls (who occasionally snuck into the office to make a phone call or two) had a gutsy grip on the non-profit funding scene. I learned more practical business there, and had more procedures demystified, by being able to run with the pack, as it were.

Just as I was getting used to where the water cooler was, and how to kick the copy machine in just the right place, everything changed. The money was running out. (I keep emphasizing this point because I wonder if people really understand how hard it is to do business when you're really broke. You can't gain access to new technology, you can't even keep outdated technology running, you can't pay staff people to be there consistently, and nobody has the time or stamina to do basic things like take out the garbage.) There was talk of a move, which I naively thought would be fun. In a whirlwind we found a new place, drew up plans, hustled volunteers, loaded trucks in the snow, and worked out of a temporary space we called our "FBI Field Office" for three months; the phone was even routed to my house for a few weeks. We drank beer in the office, breathed drywall dust, sang bulk-mail spirituals, and prayed that the city would grant us a building permit while we bore delays, disagreements, constant rearrangements, and jury riggings.

We were in our deepest dejection and suddenly—just like in *It's a Wonderful Life*—the neighbors all showed up with



bundles of money, broken piggy banks, year-end tax write-offs. From an empty, booming hall with no walls in a filthy, cold factory building we managed to raise (what I thought was) a lot of money in a few months. People were very responsive—and very patient, because we kept going back to them over and over again asking for donations. Then the building grants got okayed, the permit passed, the walls started rising, and the staff began programming again as soon as there were walls to hang art on and a room to show movies.

That's Hallwalls from my perspective. I'm not a curator (one of the glamorous, prestigious jobs). I only order the office supplies, open the mail, keep the books, answer the phone, send out membership cards, try to enhance the stability of the office, design wild stuff like stationery, go to the post office, keep the books, and call the copy machine repairman. I'm starting to think that Hallwalls needs a really boring, steady person to do this job. Someone who wants to be very predictable. Not really like me. I'm still a musician, and it's starting to drive me crazy.

Kilissa McGoldrick left her position as Administrative Manager at Hallwalls in 1995 to continue her work as a member of the Jazzabels and with the not-for-profit organization MUSE (Musicians United for Superior Education). Her comments here are excerpted from a 1995 text written for this volume.



Publicity photo, circa 1985. L-R: Gary Nickard (CEPA Director, 1982-88), Tim Burns (Hallwalls board member), Mark Chason (board member), Tom Downey (Chairman, Congressional Arts Caucus), Christine Tebes (Development Director, 1983-87; Executive Director, 1987-90), Bill Currie (Hallwalls Director, 1979-87). Works by Jonathan Borofsky and the Kipper Kids can be seen in the background.

SARA KELLNER (*Exhibitions Curator, 1991-present*): It's getting better now, but with Hallwalls, everybody says it's really five little Hallwalls: the exhibitions Hallwalls, the performance Hallwalls, [and so on]. Each curator has always operated their own program as their own thing. Maybe a little bit of it was proprietary, but most of it is just having only so much time to do stuff. Most people have second jobs, and interaction and communication takes time and patience, which most of us never have. It was a weird time when I came in, because most of the staff had been cut to half time. I was there all the time; I didn't care how much I was getting paid because it was an opportunity and I was willing to stay there all the time, you know, research and do stuff. I was 23 years old at the time. It was a total crisis period in Hallwalls history, which I was semi-oblivious to. It was actually a good thing; I was the only person on staff who wasn't completely burnt out by what had happened. I think that's how artists spaces work: you get in those young people and take their energy for all it's worth. That's how it happens. I'm now one of the old burnt-out people [laughs]

Excerpted from a 1995 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

TONY BILLONI: To the person on the outside—to a lot of people's chagrin—it was like, well, no one's in charge here; what the hell's going on here? To let artists run [their own organization] might be one of the great democratic moves: to [give curators] personal control over a particular area, so that it can be a learning experience for both the programmer and the participants—and I mean the artists and the audience: how can something like that NOT go on? Wouldn't the next person that's excited enough say, "Man, I wanna be part of this too"? A typical response from a person on the outside is that Hallwalls is a bunch of elitist snobs. But if somebody comes in and hangs out for a little bit, they go, "I want in!"

STEVE GALLAGHER: Hallwalls was like a double-edged sword. It was one of the best experiences I've ever had, and, in retrospect, some of the most wasted time. [laughs] There are a lot of things I regret; I regret not having treated it as a part-time job, when it was. If I was a little more bourgeois and my real focus was on my relationship and going on vacations with a lover and maintaining a stable 9-5 job in order to be able to afford to do that, then I would never work at Hallwalls! [laughs] None of us had real lives outside of that place while we worked there because we poured everything into it, became best friends, invested a lot in relationships with artists and with each other, and relationships outside of there suffered for that reason. If I'm trying to do anything in my life these days, it's to treat a job as a job and to cultivate a life outside of it, and it's difficult to do that after 15 or more years of doing just the opposite. It's very hard to break that pattern.

Nothing [I've done since leaving Hallwalls in 1989] has ever lived up to that experience. It was a real group effort; it was a good group, with regular meetings, a lot of communication, a lot of support, a lot of interesting artists, and a great influx of money at a time when we were ready for it. It was so ideal at Hallwalls and Media Study to have access to equipment, editing rooms, projection equipment: so much of what I was able to do [as a film-maker] was because of the access I had. To think of doing it down here [in New York City, where he now lives] is just off-putting, because the cost of getting everything, and not having a car, and getting it together ... everything suddenly becomes a huge chore. Nothing's ever been as easy as Hallwalls was. Everything's gotten increasingly complex. So it's kind of an idyllic memory.

Excerpted from a December 1994 phone interview with Ronald Ehmke.

LINE OUT or MONEY DOESN'T TALK, IT STUTTERS

Daniel A. Rigney III

*"Telephone line, give me some time/I'm living in twilight."**—"Telephone Line", Electric Light Orchestra, 1976*

If I woke up in the middle of the night with a telephone stuck in my ear, I wouldn't be surprised.

Me: Hi, this is Dan calling from Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center. May I speak to Your Name Here?

Your Name Here: Yeah, this is me. You want money or something?

I telemarket for Hallwalls. Four nights a week I come in after 5 PM, sit at my desk and speak to Western New Yorkers about pledging financial support to the organization. My sole mission: improve our cash-flow situation. Or so it would initially appear. After doing this for a while and watching too much C-SPAN, I think I serve a dual purpose. Weird as this will sound, there are nights I have for some people briefly become the Voice of Hallwalls. My current telephone cohort, Sue Pfleger, will probably tell you the same thing. When we call people up to ask for money, many times the pitch for cash turns into a discussion of what Hallwalls is up to. I used to do this for WBFO and many times ended up talking about music and other issues with the people at the other end of the line. Somehow, though, this is different. Hallwalls people LOVE to sound off. Sometimes critically:

Your Name Here: Ooh yes, Hallwalls. I am VVVEEER-RRY familiar with your organization. I have supported you for years and years and years. It is sad that I must decline your invitation to "re-up," as you say. And I must tell you my reasons, which are very clear and precise, as you will soon see. For it seems to me your work, as it were, is not so much of the intended "we" as it is of an ex-ten-ded mal-for-med "i" (small "i," of course). Although we cannot be "we" without all the little "i"'s in the world—our world, the world OF the art beyond the "art" OF the world—your little "i" appears to be shrinking. And I don't see as many watercolors I used to. Isn't that sad?

Me: So ... is \$60 too much to ask?

Some like to talk about the rich and exciting history of Hallwalls:

Your Name Here: It's too bad you're not in that old space right now. I could tell you exactly where that stain is.

Some are of a political bent:

Your Name Here: You know, I'd burn City Hall to the ground for you guys if I had the money. But right now, I don't.

Me: Can you do \$20?

It's funny, when I first started calling out for Hallwalls, I expected much more resistance to talking about contemporary arts in financial terms. So much of what Hallwalls has done over the years came out of a desire to wrest away the control economic concerns were having on the art world. I was prepared for long discussions with erudite individuals about Marxism, Socialism and hegemony. Instead:

Me: So that's a \$60 pledge?

Your Name Here: Oh wait! You're the gallery that pissed Mayor Griffin off, right?

Me: (sheepishly) Well, yes.

Your Name Here: Make it \$100.

I have a theory. It's not researched and I have no references, but bear with me. I think people are donating money to Hallwalls instead of voting. I think people believe that government can't do anything for them. This past election certainly proves that people are much more likely to let the sand slip through their fingers than build castles with it. Or something like that. Perhaps capitalism has finally won out and people really do want to vote with what's left of their wallets. It can't last. But since I get a commission, I can't exactly condemn the practice.

Perhaps the Balkanization of the United States of America is finally at hand. Maybe with the government looking the way it does today, the revolution will come and corporate blood will run through city streets like water over a sandcastle. Maybe artists will one day be free to make what they want, when they want, the way they want to make it. And yes, maybe telemarketers will be the first up against the wall when the show trials end. But until that happy day arrives, I'll be sitting in the back of our twilight bunker with the phone stuck firmly between my cheek and shoulder reaching out to touch the hearts, minds and Visa cards of Western New Yorkers. I'll be there to remind them that they have a personal stake in what Hallwalls is all about. I'll be there to listen and relay their thoughts and criticisms about our programs: you know, communicate one-on-one with each and every supporter or potential supporter of Hallwalls. I'll get their discourse into the mix. And, if I'm lucky, I'll help keep the doors open for just one more day.

Dan Rigney now serves as Hallwalls' Director of Performing Arts & Facilities. His comments here are excerpted from a 1995 text written for this volume.

MARION WARE

Hallwalls: The People You Cannot Say No To

I am writing this, not because I want to remember,
 I don't, but because there was this long rambling
 message
 on the tape, something convoluted and something
 hypnotic
 I recognized in the voice
 I knew who it was
 but it didn't sound like him.
 I continued about not having to but I could if I
 wanted to ... extended deadline after all it was Hallwalls.
 And suddenly the voice did seem to propel me back in
 time
 toward that distant grey landscape
 Oh Buffalo
 Back staring out those large ceiling-to-floor windows
 across
 to other grey deserted bldgs, half-listening as people
 rambled on
 at meetings that seemed to come from some
 Gabriel Garcia Marquez novel
 lasting hours, days, months ... these meetings.
 Afterward I always felt a kind of grace descend
 as though
 someone looked down on this small group
 people actually listening to each other minus the
 occasional
 window break
 diversity of opinions, insight, concerns, and even
 occasional imaginative rambling.
 There was this kind of active attention excepting the
 occasional window break
 to this discourse called Art and a consequent
 commitment
 to this place.
 Past performance, history of this place made it
 a giant conduit of art and artists,
 an unfortunate unfeminist metaphor,
 although there were many women, smart strong
 conscientious women,
 the metaphor still holds of hose
 of hose spewing out,
 the nozzle held down under water, the pressure building
 released jerking, whipping wildly through the air
 uncontrolled, stumbled over, chased down, whistles
 blowing, people laughing, screaming.
 It was a Great Game and a serious one.

And the tables in the center of the room were long
 cafeteria-
 like tables full of old discarded papers, calendar copy,
 unlabeled videotapes, unlabeled slide sheets, pens that
 didn't work, copies of EAR and McDonald's
 coffee cups, screws, paper clips, paint can tops, bits of
 torn
 brown paper towel scraps with jotted notes and phone

numbers and phones that always had ghost voices, some
 one else's concerns and thoughts and someone always
 reading something
 and someone always with an idea for something
 or someone coming to do
 some
 thing.

And I always wondered how could they keep this going?
 How could so many diverse personalities act both
 independently but finally in unison to bring this off.
 It was not choreographed

There was no one leader

Improv

Certainly it was a lot of Jazz. Like a hive, or a church,
 these

people could keep you up all night with the details. In
 retrospect I think they were some of the most incredibly
 generous people I have ever met.

Understand,
 they didn't have anything.

To be generous.

but they had some kind of power to make things happen.

Convince, beg, borrow

there was a space and equipment

There was intense conviction about issues

important issues they brought attention to

peoples rights, freedom of expression

... I don't remember all the great people

I met, saw, perform, speak, play.

Some I would remember afterwards when I went to
 the city

and couldn't afford to see them

after they became well known and of course you saw
 them

when ...

I was at times as entertained by the audience as the
 performance

hard to know where the stage began or when the show
 was

over. For me it was an education in a lot of ways

I do remember

but I won't tell. It's too much,

too long, too inflated, too romanticized by time, by age,
 by

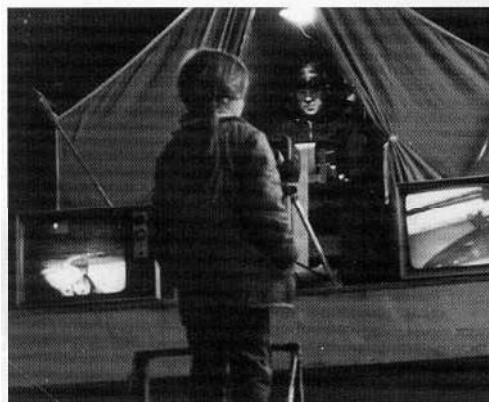
me

I found out what I couldn't be

but I also found out to whom I could never say no.

*Media artist Marion Ware served as Hallwalls' Video Editing
 Suite Coordinator and Artwaves co-producer from 1989-90.
 She wrote the text above for this publication.*

ONE-NIGHT STANDS: VISITING ARTISTS



Wilfoughby Sharp (in tent) and Installation, 1975.

"What I did," [Hallwalls' first invited speaker, Robert] Irwin recalled, "simply as a way of getting myself out of the dilemma I was in, was that I said I would go anywhere, anytime, for anybody, for anything. I made myself very available—and I made it for free ... I mean, I didn't put out any ads or anything, but word got around. And you could be, let's say, up at UCLA, and you'd say, 'Well, let's take advantage of that. We'll have him come up and talk to the students.' And that's just what I'd do..."

... [For] a long time nobody asked. Nobody knew what to make of the offer, and Irwin was no help: he didn't have a clue. "Curators would ask me, 'If we invite you, what are you going to do?' and I would have to say, 'Well, I don't know what I'm going to do; I'll just spend some time there and then decide.' They'd say, 'Could you send us a plan? What's it going to cost?' Well, I wasn't going to charge them anything for my time (sometimes I'd ask them to pay my fare), but there was still the question of how much materials would come to. In other words, we had no connection, because they kept needing something tangible, and I kept saying, 'I don't know,' which also put into these situations the possibility of failure ..."

The initial invitations, when they came at all, were primarily for Irwin's presence as a speaker. Slowly, however, interest grew, and by 1972-73, enthusiasm had soared to such an extent that Irwin was almost continually on the road, wending his way through labyrinthine tours, traveling weeks on end, for example, from one small mid-western college to another: Iowa, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and then on up the Atlantic seaboard and back over to the Northwest. At each stop he might stay a week, talk with students, contrive an installation, stir things up, and then be gone. For many young art students in the vast middle reaches of this continent during the pale middle reaches of the past decade, Irwin's roadshow constituted a first exposure to significant strains of modernism and minimalism.

[Excerpted from Lawrence Weschler, Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.]

CHARLES CLOUGH, co-founder: [Robert] Irwin is really a character. He makes money on racehorses, but he's also into this Zen phenomenology [approach to] art and he just thought it'd be real cool to go up to Buffalo and talk to a bunch of students because he was, like, called, and so he came. There was a lot more of that sensibility in the '60s and '70s, that hippie kind of thing. ... Even groovy Linda Benglis, who was pretty established by then, sacked out in Hallwalls' little piece of heaven. ...

After I was gone for a year, I went back with [Julian] Schnabel and [Ross] Bleckner and Gregoire Mueller and another artist, Jeff Way, to do this show. When we showed Bleckner and Schnabel where they were going to stay, they said, "Oh, this is disgusting, where's the Holiday Inn?" And we had never gotten that response before.

[Excerpt from interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1993.]

MICHAEL SMITH

Performance artist/media maker
New York, NY

According to my records I performed at Hallwalls three times in the late '70s and early '80s. It always seemed to be on or around my birthday. I think one year there was a cake. My birthday is March 8th, so that meant wintertime in Buffalo.

I remember having quite a few discussions about the weather. I also remember having a bad cold on at least two of the three visits. Those cement floors in the old space could be really cold when walking around in bare feet and in diapers. I could easily go on about the weather but it's probably more appropriate to talk about Hallwalls. All of my friends used to talk about working at this alternative space up in Buffalo, so of course I wanted to go too. When I finally arrived I was caught off guard. Many of these Hallwallers seemed to know

more about what was going on in NYC than I did.

I had heard there was money and support up there. They had both, however the scales were tipped in favor of support. The first year I slept in a storeroom. By the time of my third visit, Hallwalls had moved to a bigger, fancier space, replete with varnished wood floors, track lighting and a larger audience. That night I slept on someone's couch. OK, so the alternative circuit wasn't that glamorous, but it made up for it in other ways.

Hallwalls seemed like a selective club with a membership whose common interest was making sure the shows and ideas moved in and out the doors on a regular basis. It was a good time for me. Each time I performed I got a fee, another line on the résumé, a riveting weather anecdote, and a distilled sense of what was happening in the art world in my own backyard.

KATHY HIGH, *video curator, late '70s*: Somehow it was always really late at night and we always needed to feed someone, like a visiting artist. And it was hard to find anywhere to eat late at night in Buffalo (other than wings) in those days. More often than not we ended up at Towne Red Hots for Greek omelets (feta cheese and eggs). Add a little hot sauce and it tastes not half bad. I can still remember their brown plastic coffee cups and the waitresses who looked gray and worn from too many late nights and too many short-order cooks.

STUART SHERMAN

Performance/visual/media artist
New York, NY

The big blizzard of 1980 was a tough act to follow, but I tried. However, it's not easy packing tons and tons of dirty New York City snow into an immaculate though small, small though immaculate briefcase, and it's even harder unpacking tons of snow—dirty or otherwise—onto a—oh, let's call it a "TV tray" (for lack of a better place on which to word it). Sighs of relief notwithstanding up under avalanche of meaning something else: that it never really stops beginning to snow anywhere, except, still, at this one performance whose conclusion

brought to my very strict attention a woman claiming to be my sister (who actually lives in Buffalo and was actually there that night). She rushed up to me—nearly slipping on her tongue and breaking into actual speech—and with her breath visibly formed these words: "I didn't understand a thing!"

Fall, snow, fall—faster, harder, whiter. Don't ever stop beginning—for another 20 years and another 20 years and another 20 years and another 20 years...

KATHY HIGH: [Media artist] Tony Labat came from San Francisco and lived up to his reputation for confrontational and surprising performances. When Tony arrived he told me he wanted to rent a bus and take the audience on a surprise trip as part of his screenings and performance. He wouldn't even tell me where we were going until I wormed it out of him at the last minute. After a brief performance in the gallery he asked the entire audience to go downstairs and get onto a waiting bus. Everyone complied, and we drove across the border into Canada with the entire audience on the bus and visited the Canadian side of Niagara Falls. It was the first time a visiting artist had ever taken us to the Falls.

TONY BILLONI, *performance curator, early '80s*: We should probably talk about my parents' influence on the New York performance art scene. [laughs] Eric Bogosian stayed at our house, and Karen Finley, and Boris Policeband—although Boris Policeband was only in Buffalo for a total of 12 hours. He just didn't want to be anywhere but New York City. He flew in in the morning, I picked him up at the airport, he ate dinner at my folks' house, we sat in my room and listened to the news station, we went to Hallwalls. I forget who opened for him, but he was so adamant about leaving that he insisted on playing first, so I could get him to the airport by 9:30. But his piece was great.

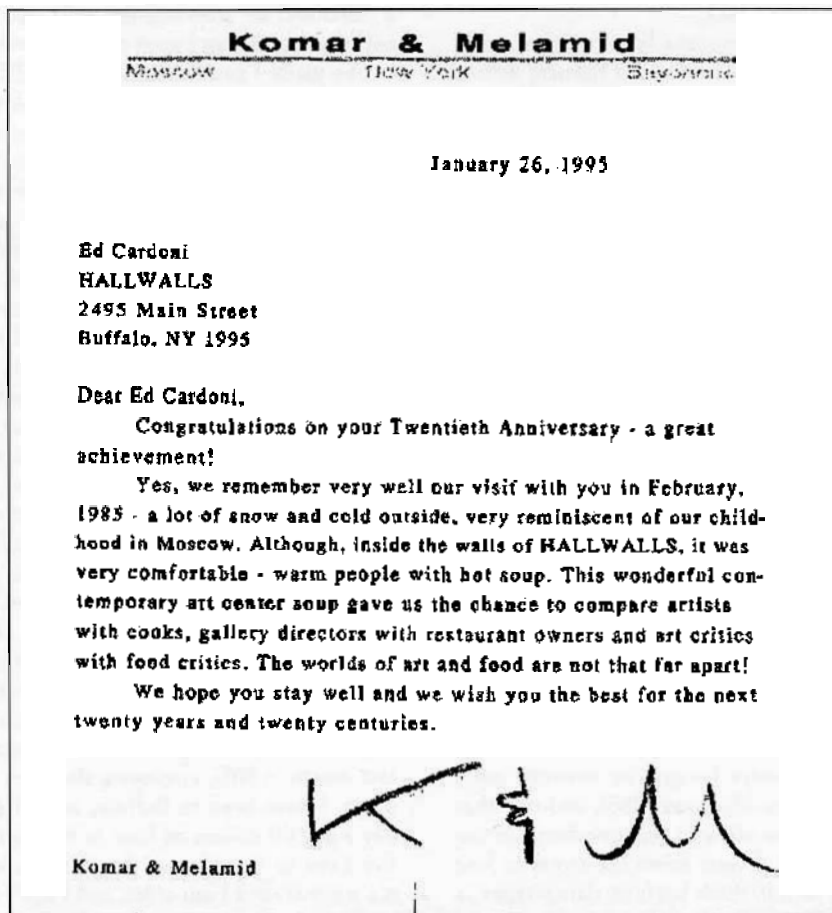
When Karen came to town, I went to work, and she and my folks walked around Kenmore and found all her props at the Salvation Army near my house.

RON EHMKE: So your parents actually directly shaped Karen's approach to materials ... And there's this legendary story about Eric Bogosian's stay at their house—

TB: —I only heard this after the fact; I wasn't aware of it at the time.

RE: Well, supposedly there's this family modeled on the Billonis in one of the monologues he did shortly after that trip to Buffalo, inspired by their dinner conversation. I've never found it myself, so I guess it'll have to remain on the level of myth until some scholar can confirm it. But you read it here first.

[Excerpt from phone interview, 1995.]



JEFF MCMAHON

Performance artist/filmmaker
New York, NY

It was December 1983; one of my first tour gigs. I had never been to upstate New York, having moved to NYC in late 1979; ignorant of the rest of the state as we transplants so often are, "New York" means New York City. (Of course, every election we are reminded of the rest of the state, resentful and Republican, but that is another, much longer story).

My memory is shivering, in curator Steve Gallagher's car and Steve Gallagher's apartment. He drove a Plymouth Duster (or Valiant was it?). A blue car with non-functioning heater, and me, blue inside it, teeth chattering away, as Steve squired me about Buffalo. (Plymouth Squire? No.) I stayed at his apartment, sleeping on the floor, wondering if this big Irish guy with the glint in his eye would expect/want/insist on me sleeping with him. I was solely concerned with staying warm, but wanted, oh yes, wanted always to be wanted. My social skills vanish when the temperature drops. I was always cold in those days, a Southern Californian with thin white skin who wanted to be the Thin White Duke. (Plymouth Duke? No.)

I assumed Steve was older because he was bigger, making me feel smaller as I shivered with frost forming around my ego. I felt grateful for being asked to perform, grateful at being put up, grateful for being driven around, and grateful, very grateful, that I did not live in Buffalo. Touring did not bring out the best in me.

Hallwalls itself was just fine. Was it cold, too? I was too cold to notice. A Barbara Lattanzi piece was up in the gallery I was to perform in; something about the bite of the tarantula. I remember something with a flashing light; the red hourglass on the abdomen of a spider, which would have to be a black widow, not a tarantula. This can't be right but this is my recollection of her piece, not the piece itself. Mine, all mine. Read your Proust.

The tarantula piece was partially taken down, to provide that neutral theater environment we all love and embrace. Easily distractible, I kept thinking about the spider piece. So there, oh tabula rasa, oh clean white space; we remember what was before us, hanging on the walls or sculpting the space, before it was made clean and clear. It's a memory you don't get from a theater. (Having written this, I remember that Barbara's piece did not have a blinking red light, but a drawing of a spiral turning around to represent the tarantella, the wild dance of the spider-bitten. Ah, Remembrances of Things Past.)

In those days I was always hungry, an appetite more socially acceptable than sex (this was 1983), and one that keeps me warm with aerobic chewing and gnashing. On the evening of my performance, I went down the street to find something appropriate to eat/drink (with us dance-types, a

dilemma of monumentally tedious proportions). Walking back to Hallwalls, it began to snow. IT, whoever IT is, began to snow and that snow became a blizzard and that blizzard begot an empty house. I believe there were something in the range of 10 people in the audience (I have done worse, but let's not get into that). At least there was something to blame: IT, the snow, the weather, the cruel season in this cruel state and this cruel city. I think there was somebody who hung around after the show that I wanted to sleep with and didn't; someone who could have made things less cruel. My recollection is vague, though I want to fabricate some braying erotic show and tell. I won't. I stayed cold.

Steve took me to a restaurant where we had chicken wings, the celebrated theme-food of Buffalo, making me loathe the city, the state, the season, ever more. To offer up chicken wings as a culinary mascot is not something to impress guests with. I have always had delusions of grandeur, and prefer that the rest of society hums along. However, this was before I mastered taking sulky refuge in snobbish epicureanism, so I just munched on my wings while longing to fly. Steve told me about/took me to (why, oh why can't I remember, and why don't I just lie?) a gay bar, or he pointed one out, or he became a gay bar and his car became a piano and we sang into the night. You know this isn't true, but can't prove it and want to believe me. I sure do.

The piece I performed was called BELIEVE YOU ME, and was me, believe me, dancing and talking in front of a row of video monitors with one large projection TV. The video score had been made in collaboration with videographer/dancer Lucy Hemmendinger, and was mostly images of myself and Lucy dancing, domestic shots, city images. It had a very jumpy rhythm, and served as a kind of audio/visual motor for the piece. Often, I would mirror, live, the image on the tape. (I was still trying to re-create the Lucinda Childs/Sol Lewitt piece "Dance", which would taunt me for years). I wore black pants and a black sleeveless T-shirt, the kind of T-shirt we all performed in before we discovered costume designers and decor and budgets, before covering up became more strategic than taking off. The text of the piece was very dense, with lots of questions and word-play. It was a good piece that I have not looked at in years. This particular performance was probably quite good, possibly brilliant, as I have a tendency to do great work when no one is around to see it. You've heard that before.

The guy in the apartment above is playing that song whose chorus goes "I've been to Paradise, but I've never been to me." This is significant because: Buffalo is certainly not Paradise, and the last time I saw Buffalo friend (and Hallwalls eminence gris) Ron Ehmke was at a performance last month in NYC, employing that very song as part of the score. I have been to Buffalo, and I have been to me, but pay a guy 60 dollars an hour to help with the roadmap, and I've been to Canaan and I wanna go back again ... When it's warmer, and I am older, and I don't feel so grateful.

STEVE GALLAGHER:
Ethyl Eichelberger, 1945-1990

Ethyl Eichelberger was an extraordinary performer whose drag shows revolutionized both experimental theater and nightlife in New York. As a longtime dancer on the bar of the Pyramid Club and a performer with Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company, and as a participant in numerous other theatrical ventures—from John Jesurun's serialized soap opera, *Chang in a Void Moon*, to the revival of *Threepenny Opera* at Lincoln Center—Ethyl always stood out. This could be attributed, in part, to his exaggerated stature; well over six feet in heels, Ethyl easily towered over his audiences. But he also seethed with energy and a generosity rarely seen on stage (or bar).

Watching Ethyl perform was like watching the creative imagination at work, writing itself into existence, rewriting itself, often soaring brilliantly, and sometimes, admittedly, failing—all at a dizzying speed that left one mesmerized by its sheer virtuosity. ... Personally, I encountered Ethyl's name long before I actually saw a performance. Week after week, scouting the performance listings in the *Village Voice*, I would come across his remarkable multisyllabic moniker. ETHYL EICHELBERGER: it just jumped off the page, simultaneously evoking a highly combustible fluid, the "largesse" of Ethel Merman, and the legacy of some exotic German matriarch.

When I finally saw a live performance at 8 BC in New York's East Village I was astounded. Ethyl superseded my wildest imaginings. Portraying several characters simultaneously (including, I believe, Carlotta, Empress of Mexico, Napoleon Bonaparte, a dwarf, a Greek chorus, and the narrator) he was both brilliant and kitsch, silly and arcane, and incredibly entertaining.

As I was booking performance art for Hallwalls at that time (1984), I conspired to bring Ethyl to Buffalo. It turned out he had never really performed his drag show outside of New York, and rarely outside the context of a gay club. He was petrified and kept postponing his scheduled performance dates. He did finally agree to appear in the context of a series that attempted to transform Buffalo's Italian American Community Center (where, for want of a theater space, Hallwalls was then presenting events) into an East Village club.

Ethyl drove to Buffalo in a small VW with an equally outlandish friend named Rita, who was dressed in full leather bondage regalia. We had arranged for them to stay at the Lenox Hotel, but Ethyl insisted that they drive back after the performance that same night. (A professional hairdresser, he had wigs to style for a performance by Charles Ludlam the next day.) They did

rest at the hotel, 75% of which turned out to be a permanent residence for the elderly. Ethyl was unbelievably charmed by the cottage cheese and jello lunch the hotel provided, and by the fact that the staff didn't flinch at Rita's appearance. That evening he did a terrific performance as Queen Elizabeth. Rita screened Ethyl's 16mm films on a projector that continually jammed; Ethyl simply incorporated the mistakes into the performance, threatening to cut off Rita's head.

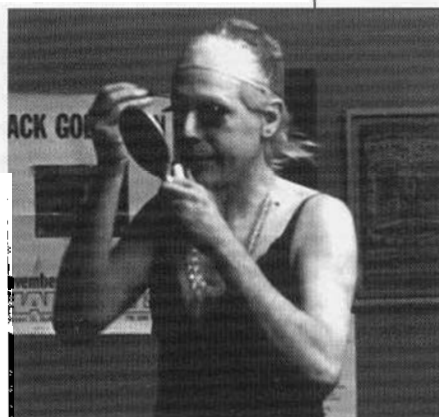
The following year Ethyl returned to appear on a bill called *Andy Warhol's Lower East Side Sampler* with Miss Hapi Phace, They Might Be Giants, and the Jickets. This time he flew up with Hapi and agreed to stay overnight. However, they missed their plane and arrived, exhausted, in the middle of the show. Hapi Phace bravely applied his make-up onstage as he performed an hysterical routine of pratfalls; Ethyl appeared as Rip Van Winkle, one of the very few endearing male characters he portrayed. Ethyl and Hapi then retreated to the dressing room

(actually the Hallwalls office) for what seemed like five minutes and reappeared in full female drag. Accordion in tow, Ethyl performed segments of his Obie-winning *Lucrezia Borgia*, followed by several encores of his trademark song, "We Are Women Who Survive."

Ethyl left us too early. When the debilitating effects of AZT, the only currently approved drug for combating AIDS, threatened his ability to perform, he took his own life. Ethyl's spirit, however, and that of the women he portrayed, will surely endure: the gay community's continuing struggle against the AIDS crisis, homophobia, and other forms of oppression will guarantee it; so, too, will our continued joy and these collective demonstrations of the many diverse "ways in being gay."

"We are women who survive/Scratch us, we bleed..."

[Excerpted from Hallwalls' November 1990 calendar.]



Ethyl in the "dressing room," 1985.

CATHERINE HOWE, *exhibitions curator, 1985-89*: The Mike Kelley show was my first experience as a volunteer. I was the girl who stood there quietly and held the pushpins for Mike Kelley. And that experience thrilled me. He didn't talk to me; he just totally ignored me and I held the pushpins. I was just in awe. He wasn't especially well known then, but he radiated this "I am an artist" persona. And I thought, I will never have this, but whatever it is, I want it.

JOHN GREYSON
Media artist
Toronto, Ontario

SWM. Or, rather, MWS, because this is not a personal ad. MWS, as in: macaroni, waitresses, smuggling. Or perhaps: waitresses smuggling macaroni.

One year, I went down to a Hallwalls conference organized by Abigail Norman on public access. This was at the height of the Buffalo cable licensing struggles, and the conference was intended to mobilize the local community around the possibilities of access. It was an exciting time, energizing, productive, lots of dynamic dialogue and friendly fisticuffs. Conference participants bonded over the legendary lousiness of the lunch menu. Personally, I've never been able to face macaroni salad again.

One year, I was showing a film at Hallwalls on Halloween. After the screening, Tony Conrad, Jürgen Brüning and Chris Hill insisted that we all go to a Halloween party. This involved a lengthy detour to Tony's studio, where we could get suitably outfitted. Out came the wigs; out came the shoes; out came the boxes and boxes of polyester waitress uniforms. Tough choices were made: tangerine orange or lemon yellow? Knee-length or mini-dress? In a fit of Canadian cowardice, I chickened out. I've regretted it

ever since.

One year, I was coordinating Kaucyila Brooke's show at A Space, the Hallwalls of Toronto. We didn't have the budget to pay for customs, so I called Chris Hill. She let Kaucyila use Hallwalls as a shipping address for the work and it duly arrived from San Diego. Meanwhile, Kaucyila arrived in Toronto, we rented a van, and successfully smuggled the work through without paying a red cent. To celebrate, we took a detour along Sodom Road (true!) and had lunch in the revolving restaurant in Niagara Falls.

One year, we were doing an anti-censorship film festival, showing films and tapes that were banned in the province of Ontario. We were worried that Canada Customs might seize the print of the gay toilet romp *Taxi zum Klo* that we'd ordered from New York. We called Hallwalls. As usual, total cooperation. As usual, total success. This time, a pleasant picnic lunch at the deserted Buffalo train station, serenaded by the howling dogs locked up in the deserted buildings.

So, please, Hallwalls, twenty more years of cross-border smuggling and lemon yellow cross-dressing. But you can skip the macaroni.

STEVE GALLAGHER, *film/performance curator, mid-'80s*: Yvonne Rainer was in town for one night; we took her for Italian food and I think we freaked her out. Ross McElwee [director of *Sherman's March*, one of the first feature films to receive an extended run at Hallwalls] got kind of bored sitting through his screenings, so he went wandering through downtown; he went up to Your Host [a now-defunct chain of slightly derelict diners] and spent the evening talking to the waitresses there. Chris Hill and I drove Mark Pauline down to the Bethlehem Steel factories; he told us how his group, Survival Research Laboratories, got much of their equipment by stealing it, so we were kind of scooping out the place, to see what he would scrounge from it if he could.

[Excerpt from phone interview with Ronald Ehmke, 1994.]

MICHAEL KANIECKI

Performance artist/musician
New York, NY

Somehow, Ron Ehmke got the idea that my piece (*Love Songs for the S.S.*—it's about being Polish-American and looks at the history of Poles and Jews together with an inevitable focus on WWII) would play best in Buffalo's Polish ghetto, where I could educate my own people instead of the Art-encrusted a-wipes who fill NPN houses and could actually use it. So, my show went up off-site at a Pol-Am social club with faulty wiring.

It was a wonderful whirl spent in the warm-breath embrace of the ghosts of polkas gone, now, and still coming, and doubled as a cautionary tale about the dangers of advanced alcoholism. It also promoted my position as a two-bit psychotherapist to my fellow Polonians, who seemed relieved and shocked that someone actually understood and was sticking up for them.

Looking down from my cross as they pickled their frustrations, I was reminded of the audiences of Holocaust survivors' children for whom I'd performed *Love Songs* in Jewish neighborhoods of New York City. They too seemed relieved to hear a Polak kvetch (I was acclaimed "Fresh Polish Prince of Fresh Meadows"), the silence being too much for them. I yearned for a common ground to which I could draw these mutually suspicious, broken-hearted folk whose love I'd felt. I dreamed of pulling them into a giant spiritual daisy chain, where keilbasi would link at last with bagel in a huge, heaving gasp. And sigh.

Alas, I didn't get to play the Candy Box on Main Street, where popular misconceptions of Poles and Jews must still rule, working their mischief uncontested by people whose identities rest peacefully on the notion that Jesse Helms is bad and not them. (Yet, one can ask, what have they done for the farmer?)

Even so, Ron gave me a marker and let me sign the wall backstage [at 700 Main]. This will confuse future archeologists. I am not usually prone to outbursts of cultural anarchy which undermine education by fouling the pool of knowledge from which graduate students crawl. But Art, like the Nuremberg defense, rests on the principle that truth and fact are not the same. And Ron made me.

That same Ron, Michael Sexton (my director), and I had a swell time at Niagara Falls, where we tasted fudge and nearly puked on some rip-off simulated ride that was supposed to be like going over the falls in a barrel. We examined Satan's Icy Penis, wrote postcards, and casually brainstormed locations for concentration camps in America, just in case. (My picks: Altoona and Boulder.)

I will always love Buffalo because Ron was the first total stranger to pay me to leave home. I will always love Buffalo because Leon Czolgosz and Cookie Gilchrist are from my hometown.

And I dig snow.

Let it.

Let it.

JONAS DOS SANTOS

Installation artist
Philadelphia, PA

I saw Hallwalls' walls grow.

Terrific people contributed to my installation.

Excellent dinners.

I hold the record for the number of places I stayed.

Great shopping with Sara.

The best an artist can have.

Happy birthday Hallwalls!

JOE GIBBONS

Filmmaker
New York, NY

My first visit to Hallwalls, in 1978, remains vividly in my memory despite my considerable degree of intoxication. During those years of my youth, I adhered to Rimbaud's dictum—or was it Baudelaire's—to "get drunk, stay drunk, become monstrous with drink, if you want to be a poet." I don't remember how I got to Buffalo, but I know I went to stay with Tony Conrad and Anne Turyn at their ramshackle dwelling in some godforsaken corner on the outskirts of town. They had shaved most of their hair off and looked peculiar to me, fresh from SF where it was still Woodstock Nation.

I offered them some ginseng ampules and they offered me a bottle of gin, or maybe it was the other way around. I remember they made something macrobiotic for dinner that I couldn't eat. As a result there was nothing to stop the alcohol from going straight to my head. If I recall correctly, they kept urging me to drink more. Looking back, I realize it was for their own perverse amusement, to watch me make a fool of myself. Of course, I had a low tolerance for alcohol in those days, being primarily a hard-drug user.

A blackout must have ensued, because I don't remember how I got to Hallwalls, or what caused my ire, but there I was, berating the audience for no reason. I had shown a 25-minute super-8 film I had made just for the occasion—back in those days I wanted to make only "site-specific" films—and maybe it had something to do with a perceived lack of appreciation for the film. I spent part of the evening in an empty storeroom, and I may have gotten sick and messed up the place. I also recall an intimate moment, after the show, with a kindly old dog stationed by the door. I felt he understood me. It was snowing and I borrowed Anne Turyn's old Rambler to go out and get more champagne. I may be mistaken, but I think I ended up in bed with Tony and Anne.

That's all I remember from my first visit to Hallwalls.

Some time afterward I heard that I would not be invited back.

But the years passed, a new director was installed, and I was invited back in 1984. This time, eager to make a good impression, I brought a case of champagne to the screening. Tony Conrad was now living with Barbara Broughel, and I think she must have prevailed upon the director to put me up in a hotel, having heard of my bad behavior. The show went very well, and my film *Living in the World* was received with enthusiastic applause. Maybe the champagne had something to do with it, maybe not. I was only mildly intoxicated, but I remember very little else about the show. I do have a clear memory of Tony showing off a pearl-handled pistol he had just bought from the Indians living next to him, and we emptied several rounds at the rats scurrying behind Hallwalls.

Later we ended up at Tony's loft, where I did my impression of Leon Trotsky leading the workers of the world in song, which Tony captured on video and subsequently made quite a lot of money from, not a penny of which went to me. I am told that even later that evening Tony caught me in bed with his wife Barbara and son Ted, and beat me into a pulp, but I have no recollection of that.

Oh, but I'm forgetting the performance I did with Tony Conrad at Hallwalls in 1986. We called it *Laughter and Defecation*. I like to say that the "laughter" part was my contribution, the "defecation" part was his. I wasn't drinking at the time, and perhaps as a result I remember nothing about the performance. Afterwards there was some kind of orgy at Tony's place with Chris Hill and Paul Sharits and Ron Ehmké and some high school girls—or were they boys?

After that show my work became more mainstream, I achieved commercial success, and my name became a household word, or two. Needless to say, I have not been invited back.

BRUCE LaBRUCE
Filmmaker
Toronto, Ontario

I have no fond memories of Hallwalls, not because I didn't have some intriguing and memorable experiences connected with this most prestigious art institution, but, owing to the copious amounts of alcohol which invariably accompany my whirlwind film junkets, I'm rarely able to isolate specific occurrences with any precision. Fortunately, with the help of friends whose memories have been less compromised by drink, and intermittent scribbles in my diaries, I have been able to piece together a remembrance, which, had I a memory, would be fond.

Hallwalls was one of the first international venues to take notice of my modest super-8 movies. Imagine my excitement at the glamour of being invited to display my work by one of the Northwest's (sic) most high-profile galleries. It must have been 1988 when I was introduced to Hallwalls' film curator of the moment, Jürgen Brüning, in Toronto at some pretentious screening or other, but it was not an auspicious event. We had been aware of each other's work from a distance, but when introduced in person exchanged perfunctory greetings and immediately turned back to our previous interlocutors, the kind of chilly reconnoitering that only fags can pull off with any real élan. Less than a year later, I ran into Jürgen, quite by chance, at the Stud in San Francisco, and, of course, hit it off immediately, quasi-drunkenly sharing traumatic childhood experiences and gay philosophies in the semi-celebrity lounge. Heady with the flush of bourbon, I suggested that Jürgen finance my upcoming project, a feature length super-8 movie about the relationship between a hairdresser and a skinhead; its tentative title, *No Skin Off My Ass*. Knowing a good thing when he saw it, Jürgen proposed to give me a couple grand, and if he liked the results, would consider blowing it up to 16. The rest, as they say, is gay history.

In the meantime, before I started to shoot my first feature, Hallwalls invited me and my partner in crime at the time, G.B. Jones, to come down to Buffalo to present an embryonic program of short super-8 movies ... also including work by Candy Parker.... G. B. Jones was indisposed to travel at that time, so Candy and I, in grand Warholesque tradition, enlisted our friend Jean Mean to come along and impersonate her. Our "chauffeur" was to be Penelope Buitenhuis, the Canadian expatriate filmmaker stationed in Berlin whose work Jürgen also produced, driving a white sedan generously rented by Hallwalls.

The trip from Toronto to the Canadian border was uneventful, save for the blasting of punk tunes such as "Chicken Hawk" by MDC and "Sexbomb" by Flipper, selected specifically to set the mood for the occasion. The border itself, however, was an entirely different matter. Greeting us with thinly concealed mistrust and distaste, the customs officials treated us with a surly contempt which, I am certain, they generally reserve for ethnic minorities. In fact, when they thoroughly

frisked us, some mention was made of the "Zulu Tango," their expression for the humiliating motions they put people of African descent through. Thoroughly suspicious of our cross-border shopping spree ruse, they searched us rigorously, inevitably coming up with a number of super-8 films. Fortunately (owing, I have no doubt, to the increasing obsolescence of the medium), they did not possess the technology to display the movies, and were reduced to holding up the thin strips to the light, searching for God knows what treasonable and seditious pornographic imagery. As we always made it a policy not to put any overt sex near the beginning of our movies specifically in case circumstances such as these should arise, the officials grew tired of their little charade and begrudgingly let us pass.

Although we were running a bit late for our screening, the psychological toll engendered by the border fiasco, which took several hours, forced us to stop at the nearest stateside liquor store where we each purchased a bottle of hooch; by the time we arrived at Hallwalls we were already three sheets to the wind. The turnout was rather disappointing, which made our thirst all the greater. Mean Jean, the impostor, and I introduced the films to a seemingly appreciative small crowd of ostensibly gay men. We then proceeded to drink and chat loudly through the entire screening. When the lights came up at the end, there were approximately two fags left in the theater.

Buoyed by our conquering of Buffalo, we next sought out a local gay watering hole at which to celebrate, but due to a typically prohibitive door policy/dress code—she was not wearing a ball gown or something—Candy was not to be allowed in. Too exhausted to put up a fight, Mean Jean and Candy returned to our hotel while I boozed it up inside. When I finally made my way back to the hotel room, Mean was jumping naked from bed to bed, the mini-bar having been successfully accosted. When I emerged from the shower, dripping wet, Mean had passed out and, in the darkness, and in my drunkenness, I mistook the form of Candy under the sheets for my boyfriend of the time, who was in Montreal at that particular moment, and commenced to attempt several maneuvers which were quickly and sharply thwarted by my nonplussed friend with a few sharp slaps.

Thus ends the fond unremembrance of my Hallwalls experience. Since that time I have had several connections with the august institution. The film curator who succeeded Jürgen, René Broussard, programmed *No Skin Off My Ass* there, and subsequently invited me down to New Orleans to Zeitgeist Theatre Experiments with my latest feature, *Super 8 1/2*. And Chris Hill generously agreed to smuggle an early print of this same pornographic product across the border for me en route to New York City, meeting me surreptitiously at a Chinese food joint north of the Canadian border. It's always nice to know you have friends in Buffalo.

CHRIS HILL, *video curator, 1984-94*: In November 1989, the media program hosted Russian painter and videomaker Afrika, who showed slides on the same evening as Miran Mohar from the (former) Yugoslavian artists' collective NSK (*Neue Slowenische Kunst*). Miran's slides documented NSK gallery installations: paintings hung salon style, borrowing iconography from Roman Catholic, Muslim, Eastern Orthodox, Nazi, Russian Constructivist, Communist, Croatian nationalist and Slovenian folk traditions. The audience asked him to contextualize these confusing messages. Was NSK articulating a peculiar Balkan post-modernism? Did he really think there was no difference between Nazi and Slovenian nationalist ideology? Why did the collective call itself by a German name; didn't Nazi Germany occupy Ljubljana (NSK's hometown) during WWII? His answers—did he understand the questions?—were vague. NSK had been quoted in the *Village Voice*: "We believe that the paradox is a very strong method."

The next day I took Afrika and Miran to Niagara Falls. Neither spoke much English, and I don't speak Russian, which they had in common; we didn't talk much. It was one of those stunning winter days where all of the trees along the edge of the gorge are glazed with ice, walking is actually treacherous, and squirrels seem to be the only beings not affected by the damp cold wind which penetrates any kind of winter coat. The three of us stood near the Tesla statue on the edge of the parking lot on the American side watching the only other people around, two middle-aged men in dark overcoats, possibly brothers, excitedly discussing Tesla in a language which I could not understand. I knew that Tesla was from (former) Yugoslavia, and I have since learned that many electric companies in Central Europe are named "Tesla." Afrika was the first to be distracted and broke the silence. He asked me why were there so many squirrels here in the park? In Moscow, they all would have been hunted for food.

DALE HOYT
Media artist
San Francisco, CA

While I've always tried to be the chubby Sid Vicious type, I feel my Forrest Gump mode kicking in at the mention of my friends in SNO-HO, a.k.a. Hallwalls. I was instructed not to contribute to tempting opiated self-congratulation, but fuck it. This is one aging young turk for whom only a defiant love letter will suffice.

You've always made me feel welcomed, appreciated, and understood, and I salute you for having the imagination (it takes a certain genius to love me after all) to have supported me these 15 years while others chickened out, giving up in disgust, bewilderment, and boredom. As Momma always said: "You've liked me, you've reeeally liked me..."

What's more, I always leave your company smarter than I was before. I learn stuff from you guys. Every trip has impressed me and charmed me as I witnessed your community buzzing and debating issues with enthusiasm rivaling historybook descriptions of a 1920 Parisian Latin Quarter Café. Yet you've never assumed the role of the re-educator, the Daddy Skinner behavior-modifying, proto-fascist stance our generation assumes so casually. Your crowd is different, better, singularly informed as well as sweet, sexy, sophisticated and stalwart in its commitment and vision. It's not only your mission, it's also clearly your joy: so refreshing in these days of showboating self-sacrifice and bids for PC sainthood.

But before I descend dangerously into Charles Kuralt territory, maybe I should just stop (sob) and say it: I love you people. Now shut up and give me a hug!

RONALD EHMKE:
A Day Without Art, 1992
 (Revised, 1995)

[On December 1, 1992, Hallwalls contributed the following phone-in segment (in collaboration with Squeaky Wheel and CEPA) for We Interrupt This Program..., a live nationwide TV broadcast (co-ordinated by Deep Dish TV, Creative Time, CUNY, Visual AIDS, and WYBE TV35, Philadelphia) commemorating World AIDS Day.]

The art centers phoning in tonight function like way stations on a vast circuit which spans the country. Artists, presenters, and audiences in every part of the U.S. are linked by their participation in this network, this map of human connections.

Artists come into a town like Buffalo, present their work at a place like Hallwalls, Squeaky Wheel, or CEPA, stay for a day or a week or a month, and then move on to another point on the circuit. Some of these temporary contacts remain strictly business, some develop into friendships, and sometimes those friendships grow very, very deep.

It is not an insult to say that a lot of the art produced at these way stations is by nature ephemeral. It fills a moment, fills it completely, and then it's gone. But I like to think that the building itself carries the memory of years of these exchanges: that the air contains echoes of every performance, reading, concert, and screening, traces of every one of these fleeting encounters.

This is NOT a day without art. This is a day without ARTISTS. A day to mark the absence of some specific artists and arts administrators and friends. This is a day without Bob Carroll, a day without John Bernd, Cookie Mueller, Ethyl Eichelberger. A day without James Bergeron, Manuel Ramos Otero, Ray Navarro, Gregory Kolovakos. This is a day without Harry Whittaker Sheppard, Tom Rubnitz, Phil Zwickler, Bill Olander, Curt MacDowell, Derek Jarman, Donald Woods, Assoto Saint, Essex Hemphill, Bill Cortez, Richard Roeller, Chris Nickard, Marlon Riggs, Ed Gnirke, David Dashiell. This is a day without Scott Burton, without Jack Smith, without David Wojnarowicz.

Some of these names are well known on the national circuit. Some of these artists died

before they had a chance to realize their potential. Each of these names—along with those unrecorded here to respect the wishes of survivors—represents a human life, a maker of ephemeral moments whose time was cut short by an epidemic which tries to render its casualties faceless and nameless and forgotten. But we cannot forget them.

This is not a day WITHOUT art. This is a day for ENDLESS art, nonstop art, art to fill the empty spaces of this city and every other point on the map. This is a day for art which is angry and beautiful, carrying memories and possibilities, art as ferocious and relentless as the epidemic itself.

GALIENS PRESS

Box 4026 • 524 West 23rd Street • New York, New York 10011

Mr. Edmund Cardoni
 Hallwalls
 700 Main Street
 Fourth Floor
 Buffalo, NY 14202

November 11, 1990

Dear Ed:

Many thanks for inviting me to perform at Hallwalls. I enjoyed my stay in Buffalo, your hospitality, graciousness and professionalism. Keep daring to discover our "ways in being gay".

I applaud the fact that you reach out to our communities of color. Your choice of artists for the festival, reflects many facets of our gay and lesbian rainbow community.

I sincerely apologize for not making it to the party after the show. I was exhausted. I collapsed in bed when I got to the hotel. I had gotten up quite early that Saturday morning, and I usually don't stay up late at night. Believe it or not, I am also extremely shy after a performance. Always the "I-should-have-done-this-instead of that", the doubts, insecurities... Apologies to Rene who I am sure cooked up a storm.

Once again, sincere thanks. A big hug to Maria who was so patient with the lights. She did a splendid job.

Be well,

Assoto
 Assoto Saint

P.S. Keep the money for those five Tongues Untied as part of my contribution to Hallwalls. Regards to Essex Hemphill and John Patterson. Could you send me a video cassette of my performance? Enclosed, please find a check for \$15.

REMINISCENCE

In 1986 thanks to Steve Gallagher,
I was given the opportunity
to perform ME MINUS YOU,
an expanded cinema piece,
at Hall Walls with an
all star cast of unknowns.

I wrote directed and starred
in this historic event with
Tommy Traitor^{and} Feeble Legere, both since deceased.
Hall Walls let me use their Xerox
machine to run off the fourth issue
of the Underground Film Bulletin
which we sold in Buffalo to
an enthusiastic throng. (Tony Conrad showed up and

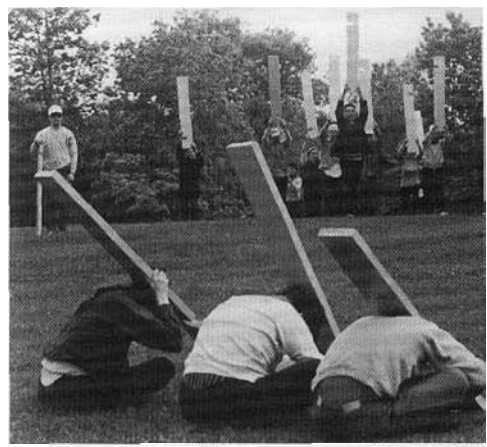
(hung out
with him
+ too.)

We got a luxury hotel suite for
our stay courtesy of Hall Walls
and I used the hotel phone to make
long distance calls to my assistant
in N.Y. Thanks to me, Hall Walls
changed their policy concerning Hotel
phones. I also picked up a girl at the
show and screwed her at an appropriate
location. A good time was had by all.
I've never been invited back.

-Nick Zedd

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: ARTIST RESIDENCIES

As Hallwalls gained recognition as a venue willing to nurture challenging projects, artists were invited to stay for weeks at a time, working with interested local participants to develop installations, videotapes, and performances. This shift from the presentation of already-completed projects toward the production of unique new works-in-progress reflects the organization's impulse to challenge the notion that it is simply one more stop on the growing national circuit of alternative spaces. By encouraging artists to explore subjects specific to life in Western New York—from a profile of the area's most famous professional athlete to a queer critique of domestic partnership issues at Niagara Falls—Hallwalls residencies have embraced participation by non-artists, deepened the collaborative ties between resident artists and visitors, brought in new audiences, and asserted the organization's commitment to its home city. They also provide a crash course in Buffalo living for the visiting artist. A residency can be an exhilarating, alienating, confusing, educational, lonely, and/or gregarious experience, as remembrances of past artists-in-residence reflect. The excerpts that follow—culled from after-the-fact recollections, working notes, previously published essays, interviews, reviews, and even a good-bye note—represent a cross section of Hallwalls' many such endeavors.



Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks, The Housing Project, 1985. Photo: Robert Flynt

ROGER WELCH: THE O.J. SIMPSON PROJECT

The O.J. Simpson Project was a Hallwalls/Albright-Knox Art Gallery joint project/residency in April 1977. New York-based artist Roger Welch videotaped an interview with Simpson, then at the peak of his playing career, and constructed an installation at the Albright-Knox incorporating film, video, and audiotape.

Excerpt from December 6, 1976 interview reprinted in a gallery publication:

Welch: [T]here's something [Muhammad Ali] seems to be pretty good at, and that's keeping the mythology going. Anytime it seems like he's slipping in the public eye, he always has something to keep that hero image alive. Do you feel any pressure that people always expect you to be the hero?

Simpson: I've thought that maybe my problem would be that I would have to tear that down. I found I was getting trapped within the image other people had of me—my image dictating who I was and what I did. I even had a manager at one point and I was going to do something and he said, you can't do that, O.J. would never do that, and I said, wait a minute, I am O.J. Simpson and I'm going to do it!

I'm growing a beard here, because I'm just tired of shaving every day, with all the anxieties I've been having this year. [...] You get letters from people who say, hey, you can't grow a beard—kids look up to you! I say, wait a minute—I'm me. I'm O.J.; I'm gonna do what I think is right, first of all for me and my family, and if someone finds something they'd like to emulate, fine, I'm glad of that, but I have to be true to myself first.

So I thought that in going into acting my biggest problem would be tearing down the good-guy O.J. Simpson to play something else. I did a movie called *The Klansman* and all the people close to me were saying, you can't do that, you can't be shooting people and everything, and I said that I'm playing a part in a movie and don't want to be on the screen [as] O.J. Simpson. [...] The guy was not a bad guy—he was sort of an anti-hero. But more of those type characters might serve to get rid of the good-guy image so when people see me on the screen they won't see O.J. Simpson.

YOSHIKO CHUMA AND THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS: THE HOUSING PROJECT

Performance curator Steve Gallagher commissioned Japanese-born choreographer Yoshiko Chuma and several core members of her Manhattan-based School of Hard Knocks in 1985 to conduct a series of workshops with local artists, culminating in several outdoor performances at locations throughout the city. Subsequent versions of "The Housing Project" (combining "alumnae" of the Buffalo production with new cast members recruited at each site) were staged at Artpark, in Boston, and at the Performing Garage in New York City.

"Windshield wipers, Buffalo, NY ..."
—X, "The New World"

It rained like hell. I was performing in Delaware Park with Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks. We were presenting "The Housing Project," a performance which included 20 or so local participants and involved the building of a giant frame of a house, consisting of brightly colored, very heavy beams of wood. Outside. In the rain.

We came to Buffalo in 1985 for a three-week workshop, during which I would teach for the first time, form lifelong friendships, fall in love, and learn more about the nature of performance than I ever thought possible. We began the project with a weekend intensive where we met our future cast members. We gathered in the gallery space on Main Street with a wild assortment of Buffalo's finest. The School of Hard Knocks was at that time a somewhat renowned scrappy potpourri of performers under the benevolently insane tutelage of choreographer/director Yoshiko Chuma. That weekend Yoshiko put the workshop participants through their paces—checking out everyone's abilities, talents and capacity for movement. I followed her instructions, leading folks around as she shouted, "Walk! Run! Stop! Fall down! CLAW!" The room came to a standstill. The company members were as perplexed as everyone else. "CLAW!" What the fuck was she talking about? I thought, "Think fast, Gayle, she must mean something. It must be some kind of bird movement." It wasn't until Donald Fleming dropped to all fours that we realized she meant "CRAWL!" and we proceeded to locomote

about the space with toddlersque glee. Later that day Thom Huber broke a rib stage-diving onto the gallery floor demonstrating what Yoshiko liked to call "What I Can Do Well."

Three weeks of running-and-stopping later, we had created a piece that highlighted everyone's various and sundry specialties, from truck driving to saxophone playing to an explanation of the history of beef on weck. We had also created an intricate system of schlepping boards and beams and doors and joists to their proper positions to build the giant house that was the visual focal point of the piece, and the world we would inhabit for the 50 minutes of the performance.

When the day of the performance arrived, we piled ourselves into pick-up trucks among the Lego-on-acid components of the House and headed off to Delaware Park. The sky threatened. The forecast was gloomy. Yoshiko said "We do."

About ten minutes into the show, the skies opened up. Downpour. We continued a-slippin' and a-schleppin', running and stopping and falling down on the increasingly slippery lawn. After our second chorus of "As the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob-Bob-Bobbin' Along," I thought, "Does NYSCA not pay if we don't do the whole 50 minutes? Why are we doing this? Doesn't anybody else mind?" Thunder. Lightning. Further downpour. And nobody left.

No one left. The performers just kept going and going and going. The audience huddled underneath picnic tables and held cardboard boxes over each other's heads. They cracked open coolers. They were into it. Yoshiko grabbed me and said, "Look at them! Go sing!" I took hold of a doorway and started singing "Stormy Weather" while behind me Harry Sheppard danced the lightest and most effortless solo I had ever seen. He was soaked to the skin. No one left.

—Gayle Tufts, 1995

Singer/actor Gayle Tufts performed at Hallwalls as part of Yoshiko Chuma's School of Hard Knocks in 1984 and 1985, as a solo artist in 1987, and with her band The House o' Pork in 1990.

The School of Hard Knocks in Buffalo will hit the road more 10 years.

—Yoshiko Chuma, 1994



FIONA TEMPLETON: THE HYPOTHETICAL THIRD PERSON

During January and February 1988, Scottish-born performance artist Fiona Templeton conducted three weeks of free workshops open to the public, culminating in three evenings of structured improvisation. Several of the workshops took place in unusual locations, including a snow-filled parking lot, the Lexington Food Co-op, the bathroom of an Allentown apartment, the Wintergarden at Niagara Falls, and an unsuspecting UB night class. The following notes are excerpted from a combination of writings generated in improvisations, notes toward the final performances, and "post-hoc memories/tributes."

Hall Walls: A place to turn inside out

Vault—cave without time, to make now in, has time for now.

Any storefront—Buffalo storefronts look empty or unchanged for years—also a lot of offices where you wonder what they have to do or if they're really saying anything as you see their lips move. They also tend to have a large amount of unused space as if half the office moved out or hasn't moved in yet, with the functioning part of the office huddled in one area.

Same with the streets, empty, desperate for identity in parts through erection of follies, in others not realizing or caring that they lost it.

No ads in subways, cream colored like being inside a kitchen cabinet.

Not quite real—cocooned in snow or in warm clothes against the snow or in a dream—strangely erotic. The Lenox Hotel populated by geriatrics, at the center of each cream-colored suite the bathroom where all you do is take your clothes off and think about your body. From the bathroom to the room. From the room in again to the TV. From sleep to the room, not quite like waking up but remaining in an encompassed, carpeted padded state until completely out of doors, inside your clothes.

Wednesday January 27 workshop:

The place was something about leaves. Like there's another place, at least it's nowhere in particular but they're trying to make it into a place by calling it Buffalo Place, like if I was trying to give myself an identity by calling myself Fiona Templeton Person. Anyway at the leaves place, the place leaves, reading moves in to take its place, these guys are in hell, with flames and devils and forks and stuff, and one is saying to the other, I hate this place. So I sent it to Steen for no other reason other than he used to buy the News because of this guy, and also he thinks I shouldn't be here, not Buffalo but in general, but if I was there I would expect it to continue and I'm not condemning myself, no, though at least hell is a place. No comment on Buffalo, really, and that's precisely why. [...]

"Scene: A bathroom in an Allentown apartment. Seven or eight determined people are squirming their way past one another in a near-futile effort to follow predetermined paths around the tiny space. A man in a t-shirt inches along the wall past a towel rack. A woman with a disposable razor decorating her shirt gets caught between the sink and a number of bodies. Another woman does minuscule hops along the edge of the bathtub.

"All are dressed in black and white to match the patchy, well-worn tile and trim of the room. After a while, the occasional groan heard when someone bumps a fellow sardine becomes a steady collective moan. To the outsider versed in Hollywood horror films, it sounds a little like the cry of the undead as they emerge from their graves."

—Richard Huntington, "Buffalo Becomes a Stage for Fiona Templeton's Performance Art," The Buffalo News, February 7, 1988

**ROB DANIELSON AND TERESE AGNEW:
SALVAGE LOUNGE**

Milwaukee-based video artist Rob Danielson and sculptor Terese Agnew spent five weeks in Buffalo during the Fall of 1988 conducting interviews with sanitation workers and garbage collectors and assembling discarded materials for their Salvage Lounge installation in November and December.

Dear Ed, Barb, Chris, Cathy, Ron, Tony, Brian, Paul, Cheryl, Hallwalls—

We're off to Milwaukee tomorrow morning. Again, thanks so much for all the incredible support during our residency. At times it felt like you were taking turns to do everything you possibly could to make us feel appreciated. What an inspiration you are!

Sorry for leaving you with a few thousand pounds of salvage to deal with. That's just the way it is: salvation. Here's a list of what goes where:

[...] Teddy the Scraper has claimed all of the metal in the "Bulk Pick-Up" area. There's quite a bit of copper, nickel, bronze, aluminum, etc.—he knows what's there. Teddy will also take all of the untagged scrap that's sprinkled around—but don't let him take the 55-gallon drums! You can reach him by phone at Citizen's Village on N. Jefferson St. on Bingo Night. (Wednesdays?)
[...]

Unfortunately, to the guy who loaned me the 78 rpm recording of "Shuffle Off to Buffalo,"... it got broke when I had an emergency stop and the load shifted. It's completely irreplaceable; I'm very, very sorry. [...]

For that which can't be saved, there's \$400 left in our provisions to pay for a dumpster. Use anyone but BFI. Remember, tires should not go in the dumpster. [...]

Finally, we apologize again for the trouble with the Chamber of Commerce and BFI. Just part of doing the job right, right? Oh yes! Don't forget that the items marked "Love Canal" or "Squaw Island" should definitely go to the dumpster unless the person is fully aware and is willing to provide the extra care. The absorptive materials from Love Canal like the wooden "James Joyce for Coroner" yard sign—they really shouldn't even go in the dumpster... But our time and money for this visit has come to an end.

We're off ... for now.

Terese & Rob

(Excerpted from a November 1988 letter. For more information on the project, see Elizabeth Licata's essay on the Exhibitions Program.)

CHARLES SIMONDS

Charles Simonds at work during his 1976-77 residency (co-sponsored by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) involving children from the neighborhood around Hallwalls.



MARK ANDERSON / ANN CARLSON: SECRET

In the heyday of public arts funding, a special grant from the Visual Artists Program of the New York State Council on the Arts nurtured "the Visiting Directors Series," an increasingly ambitious series of performances, including this one-time only collaboration between Milwaukee-based theater artist Mark Anderson and New York-based choreographer Ann Carlson. The following is excerpted from a tongue-in-cheek wall text incorporated in the production, which was staged as a live installation in Hallwalls' gallery space.

... The co-creators of tonight's event, Mark Anderson and Ann Carlson, are both virtuosic soloists, and each presented representative works at Hallwalls last season. Each of them has also been involved for quite some time in constructing large-scale serial performances which are often different in tone and scope from their solo pieces... In any case, it is precisely the similarities and differences between their respective styles that led me to suggest to these two artists that they collaborate for the first time on a project in Buffalo.

The title, a theme (which may or may not have been abandoned), and the basic parameters of the project were established a year and a half ago, in keeping with the time-honored cycles of arts funding;

what followed was a year of three-way phone calls connecting Milwaukee, New York City, and Buffalo. During this time, as I began learning some of the details of the upcoming work, I came to think of it as a scavenger hunt, a game of tracking down participants, locations, and various other elements Mark and Ann requested. But it was only when they actually got to town, two and a half weeks ago, and met with the choir [culled primarily from the Unitarian Universalist Church], the dancers [members of the Zodiaque company], and the Montessori students you see tonight, that the specifics of the performance came together. And it is only now, as it unfolds before your very eyes, that all of the pieces fit together in their final configuration. SECRET is a record of the entire process of its construction, a document of a certain group of people in a certain place at a certain time.

For me, SECRET is the movement of a hand through the air, a certain color in the shape of a foot, the two seconds of something you thought you remembered before you realize it was something you had forgotten.

And for you?

—Ronald Ehmke, May 24, 1989

VANESSA JONES: THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

British performance artist Vanessa Jones spent much of 1989 and 1990 traveling throughout the United States and Canada, staging site-specific performances on the spur of the moment with no special funding (in contrast to most of the other projects discussed here, which were often planned years in advance and entirely dependent on dedicated funds from government or foundation grants). The audience for her February 1990 Hallwalls-sponsored show about migration and the struggle to make a home was bussed to the then-abandoned Trico Building—which, renamed the Tri-Main Center four years later, would by coincidence become the organization's new home.

"The Trico plant, an abandoned windshield wiper factory, became a cavernous temple waiting to be filled by the American Dream of your choice. Jones operated within a square of four columns surrounding a circular floor mural that depicted a symbolic map of urban

malaise. A local gospel choir hummed at intervals, and a pair of folk dancers galloped on and off while Jones orchestrated paradoxes of ethnic identity and rootlessness. A sonorous voice-over citing migration statistics, and the labels on the mural itself—River of Corruption, The Fall of the Western World, Harbor of Industrial Waste—offered literal signposts along Jones' evasive road of repetitive scenarios and symbolic gestures. At the end, she passed out chalk to the audience, welcoming their contributions to her global perspective. This action, more than anything else she had done during the evening, was a helpful sign that her intentions were affirmative and useful rather than those of a disengaged outsider."

—Elizabeth Licata, *High Performance, Summer 1990*

ROBBIE McCAULEY: THE BUFFALO PROJECT

Robbie McCauley's *Buffalo Project*, an examination of the "Buffalo Riots" on the city's East Side in 1967, was developed over six months of intensive research and rehearsal; script material was drawn from archival materials, interviews with witnesses, and cast commentary. Unlike earlier performance residencies, the cast of the project consisted of professional actors, drawn largely from Buffalo's Ujima Theater. The multi-media production was performed June 22-24, 1990 at three sites located in or near the neighborhood where the violence took place; a revised version was presented at Artpark later that summer.

Being shy, I need help initiating work. In 1989 I realized how important good curator/producers are. Ron Ehmke, who brought *Indian Blood* to Hallwalls in 1988, is particularly good at asking questions that stimulate work. I like this story: I tried to relate to the audience during the onslaught of images, music, and text in the piece about patriotism and rebellion and other contradictions. So I made a little joke: Surely there are no / racial problems in Buffalo / because when I ride around the town / I don't see any black people... / (only the slightest teeter of laughter). Ron approached me after and asked what my thoughts were about that moment. I answered that I was interested in possibly doing a piece to find out more about the town that way, a Northern industrial town, what were the stories. The rest is sort of history. Well, Ron and I talked on the phone a lot about the stuff of the project, how it would go, who I'd work with, and for each possibility I came up with, he had a suggestion: the Black theater company in town, Ujima, other groups in town—including the Polish Community Center and the Langston Hughes Institute, both of whose directors eventually provided spaces for performances and witnesses to be interviewed for the piece—and a small book about the 1967 events, *Anatomy of a Riot*, by Dr. Frank Besag.

It takes a long time for behavior to change for both blacks and whites. More black people make more money now. But not so many or so much. Black people are more visible in more variety. Bad behavior by white people is more visible. The instability of middle-class security is as apparent to whites now as it's always been to blacks. It is not at all fashionable now to identify with the oppressed. Through the media people are constantly fed



The Buffalo Project, 1990. L-R: Tom Dooney, Barry Burtis, Lorna C. Hill Emanuel Fried, Diane Cammarata-Charlesworth.

the/gold streets/of/america myth. Hundreds of people without homes in this land speak another story. Performers transmitting history can allow audiences to share things on a more visceral level.

Performance theater pieces that I conceptualized and presented from 1985 to the present (1995) were consciously created from thoughts about how personal issues are connected to social ones. These were *My Father and the Wars*, *Indian Blood*, and *Sally's Rape*, largely self-produced and performed throughout the United States; *The Buffalo Project* at Hallwalls; the Primary Sources series (*Mississippi Freedom* in Jackson and other sites in Western Mississippi; *Turf* in four neighborhoods of Boston, Massachusetts; and *The Other Weapon* in four neighborhoods of Los Angeles, California), produced by the Arts Company headed by Marie Cieri in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In these works the actor becomes a character. She may enter and exit certain roles in the performance, but essentially the actor is shaping an aspect of her persona as a character in the piece.

In my work with different groups of people in various places in the United States, I chose to work with actors of each community. An assumption I encountered in doing work with communities is that the artist must involve herself quite a lot with the community in order to work in it. I was driven by something else. I was driven by the catalytic function that art has, by the possibility that people can be stirred to self-reflection or even transformation by work done that respects, mirrors, and involves them. Such work required an openness allowed by the acting process, a kind of work that uses the actor's ability to go inside and outside the events, to use a kind of alienation. I wanted to work with actors who lived in the place. *The Buffalo Project* became the first of several of these works.

—Robbie McCauley, 1995

CAROL LEIGH/SCARLOT HARLOT: UNITED SLUTS OF AMERICA INVADE BUFFALO

"The *Buffalo Project* is, in essence, the voices of a community engaged in a dialogue: about past issues and present concerns. Many stories gathered by McCauley and the cast are used verbatim, amidst a backdrop of slides and video from the actual riots, including news footage of key events. [...] What comes out clearly is that there is no single version of the truth; at almost every point in the piece one person's story is contradicted by someone else's. [...] 'Buffalo is the most racist place I've ever seen,' a voice cries out, and the audience questions: is it?"

—Elaine Manusos, *Arts in Buffalo*, July 4, 1990

"Voices swing in and out, cross over one another, egg each other on. 'Integrated? When it's more white than black, it's integrated; more black than white, it's a ghetto.'

"Then singing starts, or a chant, alternating with narrative. A mini-history of the Fruit Belt is patched together, as is the story of how Fuzak's meat market stayed [open] through it all. A white actor, out in the audience, tells how a policeman asked him one violent night, 'Why didn't you use your gun? Why didn't you kill those niggers?'

"[...] With the amount of audience interaction involved—at one point [actor Emanuel] Fried faces the [spectators at Hallwalls] and asks, 'How many whites are here?'—we can expect things to vary when the performance moves to the Polish Community Center tonight and to the Langston Hughes Institute on Sunday."

—Richard Huntington, *The Buffalo News*, June 23, 1990

Additional material on The Buffalo Project can be found in Robbie McCauley's essay "Mississippi Freedom: South and North," in Theater, Number 2, 1993, and in C. Carr's profile of the artist in On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

Video curators Laura McGough and Chris Hill brought guerrilla media activist/sex trade worker Carol Leigh, a.k.a. Scarlot Harlot, to Hallwalls in the spring of 1993 for a week of workshops and street performances culminating in a new tape about the lives of prostitutes in Buffalo. Leigh worked closely with members of ACT UP/Western New York, a newly-emerging chapter of WAC (Women's Action Coalition), and the Ladies of the Lake, a locally based feminist guerrilla theater group, as well as local performance and media artists. The finished tape, *Live! Sluts: United Sluts of America Invade Buffalo*, was edited by Arjay Baker.

Excerpt from Carol Leigh's minutes of initial planning meeting, May 24, 1993:

The discussion centered around [...] the ethical issues of dealing with the subject of prostitution in a situation where the group is composed of non-sex workers. [...] In an effort to shed some light on prostitutes' lives, we will interview local officials, including representatives of the following agencies:

Police Department: We want to collect information about arrest statistics, vice squad activities (number of members, how they make busts, how many busts go to trial, if they arrest off-street prostitutes, how many arrests last year, how many pimping arrests, how many arrests of prostitutes for other charges like disturbing the peace or loitering).

Neighborhood Groups: We would like to interview neighborhood group representatives about their responses to street prostitutes, about their opinions on law reform, zoning prostitutes in or out of their neighborhood, decriminalization, if they think arresting prostitutes is a good way to spend the city's money, and about their opinion of enforcing laws against off-street prostitutes.

Service Providers: We would like to know if service providers (shelters, drug treatment, rape crisis) have prostitutes among their clients, what sort of sensitivity training they provide to their staff, and in what ways their programs could address the needs of prostitutes more thoroughly. We are interested in obtaining interviews on video as well as a referral list.

Sex Worker Interviews: We discussed the practical as well as ethical issues involved in documentation of more vulnerable populations. We decided that we would probably be able to establish relationships in which sex workers would agree to video documentation. It would be inappropriate to tape prostitutes and use the footage in our context as it would basically be a situation of appropriation and exploitation. As some prostitutes are more than eager to make public statements, we would be open to that possibility if a sex worker requested it.

**BORDER ART WORKSHOP/
TALLER DE ARTE FRONTERIZO:
SOUTH - NORTH - SOUTH**

The Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo residency took place over four weeks during the summer of 1991. The project included a two-week tour of migrant farmworker camps in both the Finger Lakes region and throughout Niagara County, followed by fifteen public events, including children's workshops, outdoor video screenings, radio broadcasts, a photography exhibition at CEPA, and a multi-media gallery installation and performance at Hallwalls.

The plan was to work one week in the Finger Lakes region and one week in Niagara County. Days would be spent at school programs with the children of migrant families and at night we would visit the adults at their camps, carry on conversations and gather information. Each week would climax with some sort of performance/celebration. Then everyone would come back to Buffalo and spend 12 days synthesizing the experience into a performance/exhibit at Hallwalls.

From the beginning the need was to tie all these efforts so they would all come together and inform one another. Some participants quickly formed strong bonds with the children. Others found more nourishment in the visits with the adults in their camps in the evenings and began to extend into daytime forays into the fields where cabbages were being picked or to the packing plants where primarily women cleaned and bagged the vegetables. [...]

At the Fiestas on Sundays at Keuka Lake and then at Lockport, these families came together with the Workshop people and everyone else that came into the ring of the week's activities, and everyone danced to music made by some of the migrants. And the Workshop provided some sort of performance that utilized the art work done by the children and the stories we'd heard and the ever-present caricatures of the Migra and the purveyors of pesticides. At Keuka Lake a procession of musicians and children laid vegetable offerings around the sleeping goddess who had to rise to help ward off the threat of Migra/Pesticide Man with his wonderful papier maché spray plane that dumped on him before the children drove him running into the lake in his sinking Migra van. Then the children took turns bashing the plane and made it spill, rather than pesticides, sweet goodies into their scrambling hands.

The performance at Lockport was more theatrical, utilizing the performance space at the Kenan Center. And the preparations became ever more intense as the group worked to include more of the experience offered

by the migrant children and parents and to purify their own conception. A rap session at the eleventh hour that seemed to wrap halfway around the clock probed and debated the portrayal of violence or force and the metaphor of a prize fight disappeared and sleepless performers tapped reserves for a high-energy performance that used shadow play, direct performance, digital light bar, video, sounds of the field workers, open percussion and reed improvisation, slide projection, and slapstick in a way that started out with parts of the performance occluded for different parts of the audience and climaxed in participatory ritual expulsion of the hurtful elements. Many people expressed frustration at the withholding of so much from view, but went away thoughtful about how that works for persons whom the dominant culture marginalizes as "migrants." And then more Fiesta!

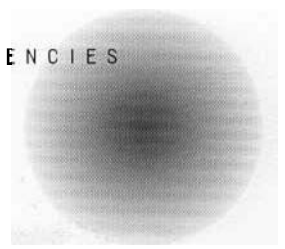
—Bill Jungels

Excerpted from "Stretching the Borders," an essay in BAW/TAF's 1991 retrospective catalogue. Buffalo-based artist/activist Bill Jungels produced a 1991 video documentary about the project in collaboration with members of the collective.

"The artists and activists that make up this year's model of BAW/TAF ... lived with the families, worked with them, listened to their stories and told them to others. But in the end, they left. The lasting benefits of their interactions are sadly, inherently, limited. Stephanie Heyl dealt directly with this fact in her opening monologue, *Lost in Translation*. In a poetic stand-up format, Heyl spoke of her own life and how it had become inextricably intertwined with the families she had met during her residency. [...] Her fluent and comprehensive presentation provided a thoughtful backdrop to the company's multi-media centerpiece, *Routes Migrant Roots*. [...] With flashlights, movement, and sound, the company transformed [Hallwalls'] performing space into a harrowing corridor of escape and transition. Moments of bravura became the framework for an eloquent enactment of the migrant workers' day-to-day lives and transcendent concerns—pesticides, education, wages, living conditions."

—Elizabeth Licata, *High Performance*, Winter, 1991

*For more information on South = North = South, see Mark Alice Durant's essay "Activist Art in the Shadow of Rebellion" in *Art in America*, July 1992.*



BRENDA AND GLENDA: ARTWAVES VIDEO RESIDENCY

Queer activists Duncan Elliot and Glenn Belverio, better known as Brenda and Glenda, visited Buffalo during Hallwalls' second biannual Ways In Being Gay Festival (November 1990) to screen sample episodes of their Manhattan-based cable access series and to shoot material for new episodes.

When my drag career erupted spontaneously in the summer of 1990—a mass of messy blonde curls and a borrowed house frock punctuated by youthful activist anger—I never dreamed it would enter into the auspices of the then awe-inspiring art world. When my friend Steve Gallagher suggested I send a proposal for a drag queen performance/cable TV series up to Hallwalls at the end of the summer, I thought he was nuts. Why would a bunch of big-shot art curators be interested in a couple of green queens whose careers had just started a mere three months ago? Little did I know what a splash my partner, Duncan Elliot (Brenda Sexual) and I (Glenda Orgasm) would make in the sleepy town of Buffalo.

Our first (and favorite) performance for the series went sadly, for the most part, undocumented but not unnoticed. We left Brenda's shabby Lower East Side apartment at seven a.m. In full drag and unescorted we proceeded to LaGuardia airport, lugging several suitcases filled with enough wigs, makeup, and sequins for a month's run of *La Cage Aux Folles*.

"Maybe no one will notice us," I hoped during our car ride to the airport; I in a garish floral number and faux leopard-print coat, and Brenda in a psychedelic velvet dress and tacky gold Maude-like housecoat which created the illusion that I was traveling with my hipster auntie. Since it was the day after Halloween, it was easier for us to pass through the airport to the plane unscathed, but we did cause a bit of a scandal once we were in flight. First, a little girl who was sitting next to us was upgraded to first class to protect her from being corrupted by our obvious perversion, and then while we were taking photos of each other doing fashion runway up and down the aisle, the pilot announced that we were "experiencing some turbulence" and asked everyone to remain in their seats for the rest of the trip. When we landed in Buffalo

we were greeted by a camera crew led by the skilled Jody Lafond. During our drive from the airport to Hallwalls she switched on the radio and there was a conservative talk show host discussing the "Ways in Being Gay" fest at Hallwalls with [Hallwalls director] Ed Cardoni. "...We can look for Duncan Elliot and Glenn Belverio going forth as Brenda Sexual and Glenda Orgasm as they hold a 'kiss-in' this Friday at City Hall..."

It was at that moment that I experienced my first shock of celebrity, hearing my own name on the radio as if it were some stranger being discussed. (We were subsequently on Buffalo's local TV news and in the papers twice during our stay.) The "kiss-in" Brenda and I organized on the steps of Buffalo City Hall was expected to draw dozens of gay couples for a "militant display of lesbian and gay affection." Exactly three couple were willing to kiss on camera, demonstrating either lack of enthusiasm or fear of disclosure among Buffalo's lesbian and gay community. Luckily, we did not have to rely on the spit-swapping as the high point of the show. The climax occurred when Brenda and I barged into Mayor Griffin's office and attempted to present him with our petition that would re-establish Buffalo as "the Queen City."

—Glenn Belverio, 1995



Brenda Sexual and
Glenda Orgasm outside
Buffalo City Hall, 1990.
Photo: Alice O'Malley



**STADTWERKSTATT
TV RESIDENCY**

In July of 1990, approximately 20 members of the Austrian video collective Stadtwerkstatt produced six days of live television working out of a temporary studio in UB's Bethune Hall.

**STADTWERKSTATT-TV GUIDE
(excerpts)**

July 5: Invasion Occupation

Stadtwerkstatt-TV arrives in Buffalo, a foreign territory, and completes the American landscape with Austrian exoticism.

July 6: Religioushygienementalhealthcomplex

An examination of strange American habits: religious delusions, addiction to cleanliness, amateur psychologizing.

July 9: Hot Spot Europe

The U.S. media pictures Europe as the site of crises, wars, and catastrophes, filtered through the framework of an entertaining news show. It's time to turn the tables on this bad American media habit.

Excerpted from June/July 1990 calendar.

PART THREE IN THE HEART OF THE CITY (Making A Community)

DECEMBER BACKSPACE PROJECT
Dec. 1-31



HOLES IN THE WALLS OF THE ALBRIGHT-KNOX

Hallwalls Gallery

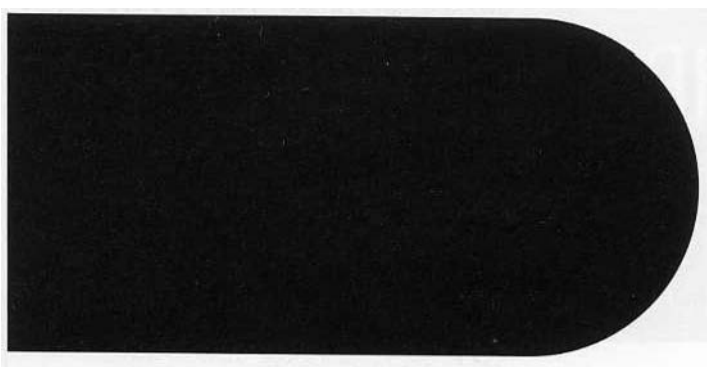
30 Essex St. Buffalo, NY

KEVIN NOBLE

Kevin Noble, "Holes in the Walls of the Albright-Knox," 1976.

"It was always a problem: to reconcile being all things to all people. Being a nurturing community art center that makes people feel good about being [in Buffalo] is one thing; trying to do shows that are 'nationally significant' and bring a level of quality to Buffalo is another issue. Can they go together? Sometimes, in the best circumstances..."

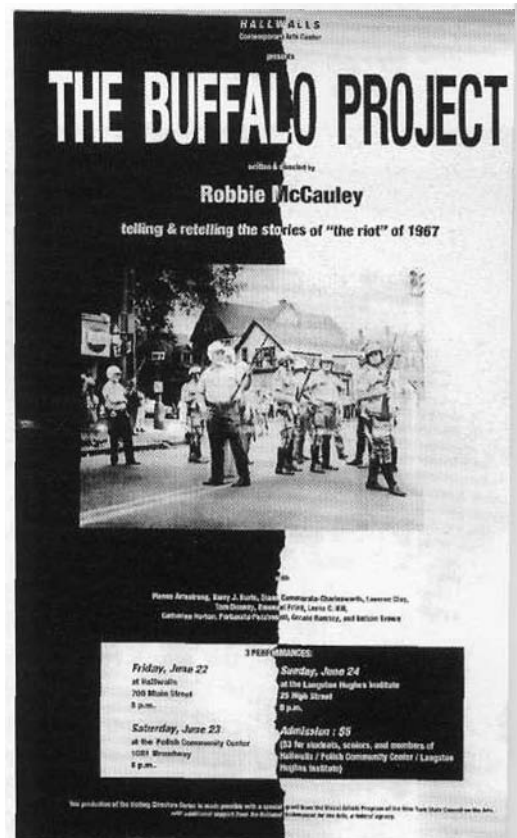
-Catherine Howe, interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994



CITY OF NO ILLUSIONS

"For too long we've kept quiet.
Letting America put down our city.
No more!
It's time to tell 'em the facts, Buffalo.
It's time to start talking proud."

—Promotional poster for the Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce's 1981 "We're Talking Proud" campaign. The poster listed 75 reasons to be proud of Buffalo, including the fact that the temperature had never gone over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (#3), the region had never had either a drought or a monsoon (#4), the air contained dangerous levels of carbon monoxide only 7 days a year, compared to Cleveland's 246 (#9), the lighting for Saturday Night Fever was designed locally (#31), the average price of a new home that year was \$55,000 (#44), and the city had been ranked "America's #1 Sports town" in terms of attendance vs. seat capacity (#62).



ANTHONY BANNON
Buffalo State College

Buffalo has been an art town since the mid-19th century, and this cultural heritage is closely linked to the city's industrial history. Located at the nexus of the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes, Buffalo linked the Northeast to the Breadbasket region in the Midwest, first by water, then by lake and rail. In the days before alternating current, the presence of hydroelectric power from nearby Niagara Falls also helped spur development. The Pan American Exposition of 1901, the first to be powered by electrical energy, was held in Buffalo for good reason, though now it is remembered most often as the site of President McKinley's assassination.

Heavy industry paid the city's bills. As an antidote to the heavy muscled consequences of industries like Bethlehem and Republic Steel, Buffalo presented its populace with a Frederick Law Olmsted urban plan and park system, some of the nation's first public art, science, history, and zoological museums, and the architecture of Louis Sullivan, H. H. Richardson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Stanford White, and Daniel H. Burnham.

Anthony Bannon is the Director of the Burchfield-Penney Arts Center and Assistant Vice President for Cultural Affairs at Buffalo State College. The above remarks are adapted from an earlier version of his essay on Hallwalls' early years in this publication.

1. MELTDOWN

MARK GOLDMAN
Calumet Arts Café

"What is New York the capital of?" the *New York Times* recently asked dozens of doyens, critics, literati, paparazzi, politicians and anybody who'd answer. It's an easy question, with a hundred and one different answers, all of them accurate. But what about Buffalo? Is it the capital of anything? Is it the center of anything? Well, probably not—but it has been the home for 20 years of Hallwalls, since the start of 1975 the center, the capital of some of the most exciting and energetic creative work being done anywhere. Hallwalls came to Buffalo during the dark night of the mid-1970s. Buffalo was in a meltdown then, a free-fall. The '70s marked the visible beginning of the city's long, slow death, the years when the bottom fell out from under us, long before we'd all learned to live with the mess that was left. You couldn't avoid it anymore as those ugly, nasty, devastating, long-term, insidious, subterranean developments which had been eating away at the city for years finally took over. The signs were everywhere: factories were closing, neighborhoods were dying and coffee could be bought, hand-painted scrawled messages at mom-and-pop stores all over

the city said, for "5 cents if out of work." Winters, it seemed, had gotten longer and colder in the seventies as Buffalo settled in for a long slow death.

Amid the growing wreckage of the city, Hallwalls was born. Like Athena? Like a Phoenix? Where did the energy and imagination come from? Had the seeds been planted by those incredible, earthshaking summers of 1967 and '68 when UB, still an urban institution, and the Albright-Knox collaborated to create two of the most dynamic avant-garde cultural festivals in the history of this country? Or rather was there something Weimarish about all of this, the sudden, most unlikely appearance amid the rubble of decay, of something so new, so fresh and so dynamic? The birth of Hallwalls in 1975 made us hope and even sometimes believe that Buffalo had indeed become the capital of something wonderful.

Mark Goldman is the author of City on the Lake: The Challenge of Change in Buffalo, New York (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990). Several Hallwalls music events and a summer outdoor film series have taken place at the Calumet Arts Café, the establishment he owns and operates in downtown Buffalo. His comments here were contributed in December 1994.

CHARLES CLOUGH
New York City

Coming from Buffalo and as a teenager going to Toronto or to New York City and seeing that both [cities] were more culturally vibrant, it made me kind of sad to think that Buffalo [had been] a lot more vibrant from the turn of the century through the '50s and that more could be going on. It could be better developed, redeveloped. So if I came from a city that was more developed, maybe I would have just left and not really looked back, but because Buffalo seemed like it sort of needed help, that seemed like a reason to do something in Buffalo. There was more of a challenge in a way.

Visual artist Charles Clough co-founded Hallwalls in 1974. His comments here were culled from a 1993 interview with Anthony Bannon.

JONATHAN WELCH
Talking Leaves Books

I'm not sure about the exact dates, but sometime around 1962 Governor Rockefeller decided New York needed a quality university system—which was accomplished, as I understand it, by buying up private universities and pumping public money into them. UB was one of these, which became one of the three or four cornerstones of the SUNY system.

Al Cook is credited by most people as the architect of the English Department at UB; he brought in people like John Barth, Leslie Fiedler, Robert Creeley, and Charles Olson. The curriculum changed, too; it opened up new possibilities for lots more people, and by the late '60s the department had become a world class institution. Up to that point the university had been attended primarily by local people. Buffalo is different from other college towns, like Berkeley or Madison or Ithaca, because it's a blue-collar town, although there was lots of old money here, too—and suddenly there were all these faculty and students coming in from New York and elsewhere, and also leaving here and spreading the word elsewhere around the country. So the population base broadened: the old "outside agitators" argument. Then there was the anti-war movement, incipient feminist, gay, and lesbian movements, and the civil rights movement; of course, the '60s were happening all over the place anyway.

I missed most of that period here. I applied to the English Department in '72 because I'd heard about what was going on in Buffalo both academically and politically. I was excited that Creeley was here, and Olson; the Black Mountain College connection was important to me. I was not alone in that; most people came here for similar rea-

sons. The war movement was still going on, and Attica had happened the year before.

In addition to all the political activity, there was this weird artistic ferment happening as well. Lots of crazy-artist types flourished here, partly because there was money—from CETA in particular, which helped fund Just Buffalo, CEPA, Hallwalls, and all these other people with vision and energy. Media Study was also starting up, which was the biggest, best funded of the art spaces in town; they were bringing in filmmakers every week.

There was a lot of interest in trying to build an alternative community which was non-profit—even anti-profit, if that's not a contradiction, to try to make a business in opposition to capitalism. That was the motivation behind Great Arrow Graphics, the co-ops, Greenfield Street Restaurant, and Talking Leaves, among others. We've all had to reinvent ourselves many times, but most of us are still here. We started out trying to provide an alternative to what led to the war. That's still what motivates us.

There are lots of stereotypes now about what the '60s were like, but that energy was very real; it happened here. I don't know if people accepted it or not, because it was often a struggle to build institutional support. It's probably safe to say that, like Hallwalls, Talking Leaves is better known nationally than it is locally. We were seen as hippies or radicals or whatever, but there was always enough community support that we survived.

Talking Leaves bookstore has been in operation since 1971. The above comments were culled from a phone interview with Ronald Ehmke in November 1995.

DEBORA OTT

Just Buffalo Literary Center, Inc.

I came here in 1968 from New York City, and this place was the provinces to me—not in any bad way, it was just a smaller city. Having lived here a long time, it feels comfortable now, it's a very livable city. I first started going to Hallwalls when they were on Essex Street and Bill Currie was the director. Just Buffalo started around the same time Hallwalls did, and I definitely felt a sense of camaraderie with them, because we were very much involved in the same kind of activities, although in different disciplines.

Early on, it was a challenge to present new works to Buffalo audiences. The university used to sponsor readings by many contemporary writers, but at a certain point in the early '70s student activity fees started going primarily toward films and rock concerts; it left a void which Just Buffalo naturally filled. The audiences in those days were primarily composed of fellow artists, and people in their 20s who were interested in cutting-edge work. That will always be the case, but it's really changed now, for both organizations. When I

see our audiences now, they're growing larger and larger, they're racially mixed, they're all ages and from many socioeconomic groups.

It takes years to build trust between a presenting organization and the communities within a city. The questions involved in that exchange are always the same: "Who are you to present the art of my culture? Where do you come from?" I'm committed to forging an American culture, to really showing the diversity inherent in that notion. Hallwalls' and Just Buffalo's programming has been consistently devoted to this goal for the last 20 years; it hasn't been flavor-of-the-month.

Another important commonality between the two organizations is the sense, now that we're in our dotage, that the people we supported early on are coming back and getting their props, now that they're established. They're sharing their work with the organizations that had the good sense and the good faith to support them early on.



Editorial cartoon, *Buffalo Courier-Express*, June 1, 1980

Just Buffalo Literary Center recently celebrated its own 20th anniversary. Founder Debora Ott's comments here were culled from a phone interview with Ronald Ehmke in November 1995.

2. HOW LONG IS IT GONNA TAKE TO NOTICE?

LORNA C. HILL

Ujima Theatre Company

HILL: I could be way wrong on this, because I was also young. You know how rosy things look a lot of the time when you're young—and I was young enough for things to look rosy—but it seemed to me that there was a tremendous amount of activity [in Buffalo in the 1970s]. Three and a half years before I started Ujima, I had a feminist theater company. I was involved with people wherever there was an opportunity, whatever was going on, whenever there was some way I could bring what I had to the situation. There were people doing projects that ultimately, in the grand scheme of things, did not come to fruition; some even failed. But they all got initiated under this tremendous impetus to do something different, to take advantage of the fact that we were in a town where you could really do anything—because there was no one capable, politically or financially, of stopping you, and there was no one competent to do what you were doing, so there was no threat. If you had a good idea, the only person able to make it happen was you, and nothing [could] stop you. You didn't need precedent, you didn't need money, you just needed a team that was willing to do it, and somebody with some basic skills to run it. And that's all I had: basic skills. But the town was ripe for that. There was a lot of dance going on, there were all these little theater companies: Ed Smith's group, Theater of Man, Theater of Youth [and others]. Alleyway Theater hadn't gotten started yet, but they were comin' right up. ... People seemed to be starting companies around an idea or a philosophy, and (being young) not really being overwhelmingly concerned about having a strong commercial base. If I had it to do now, I'd do *Guys and Dolls*, *Godspell*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Annie Get Your Gun*, and virtually nothing else.

RE: How has the city changed over the last 2 decades: politically, culturally...

LH: Well, I must confess the fact that it HASN'T changed is what strikes me. Because, frankly, when I got started at this, and there was that very level of activity we were just discussing, and as it became more concrete, and people got their chops and started to institutionalize, you kind of assumed that the city would catch on. You know what I'm saying? If the people next door start farming pigs, how long is it gonna take me to notice? And this town has been farming this tremendous wealth of talent, and the general public gives it lip service, but they don't seem to really understand that we're farming some tremendous talent here: We're sellin' this stuff to Russia!

What progress has been made has been so minor and so out of relationship with the rate of progress in the arts—the arts are way ahead of the town. And that's disappointing. You'd think by now it would have caught on. As certain blue collar jobs left town, you'd think someone in City Hall or something would have said, "Well, we don't have this to export [anymore], but you know what we've got in Buffalo that they don't have in Rochester and they don't have in Syracuse or any of that? We actually produce a great deal of talent! Now, maybe there's a way we can get behind some of this arts thing, maybe we can make that 'film bureau' real, instead of pretend, maybe there's some stuff we can do, to actually make some money for Buffalo on the talent that it generates."

[As for Ujima,] the original condition is still true: there's still no one politically or financially able to stop me, and there's no one competent to do what I do.

Playwright/performer/director Lorna C. Hill is the Artistic Director of Ujima Theatre Company, the organization she founded in 1979. Her comments here are adapted from an interview with Ronald Ehmke in 1995.

TWO GALLERIES OUT LOOKING FOR A HOME

... The Theater District in downtown Buffalo is an upcoming specialist in silver linings—old drab buildings put to new shining uses by sunny, forward-looking tenants, that sort of thing. ... The trouble is money. "It's gong to be difficult on our limited budget to move [downtown] unless we get financial help," says [CEPA director Tom] Damrauer. "The square footage is going at about twice the rate as other parts of the city—\$3 to \$4."

"We are very realistic people in the arts," adds [Hallwalls director Bill] Currie. "The city tells us that it's so exciting there, but we say, it's only exciting when you can afford it. We are getting money from everywhere but the county and the city. The New York State Council on the Arts (45 percent of Hallwalls' budget and about 30 percent of CEPA's) and NEA don't care where we are; they care about the effectiveness of our programs. Are we to cut back on programming in order to move downtown?"

"We have been in Buffalo for five productive years," continued Currie, "and nothing has surfaced from the county or city and very little from corporations. This would be a good time for something locally to happen."

... Both gallery presidents [sic] recognize that the work they show is often esoteric from the standpoint of a general audience, but both emphasize that they touch the community directly and positively on a number of fronts. Damrauer points out as examples, CEPA's "Portrait of Buffalo's Photographic Past," an exhibit of pre-1920 photos shown at Senior Citizen Centers, the numerous community workshops, and the ongoing photographic displays on city buses.

The substantial grant funds activated by the two organizations are an obvious economic boost to the city, says Currie. "It employs people and puts money into the city. With 50 distinct programs a year at Hallwalls a lot of people, many performers, are moving in and out of Buffalo Airport, going to restaurants, buying props, renting equipment, and putting work into the hands of printers."

And there are benefits to Buffalo that aren't necessarily felt immediately. The growing national reputations of Hallwalls and CEPA as prime examples of alternative exhibition spaces to commercial art galleries may very well make the city, as Currie says, "a hot-bed of ideas and a clearing house for new art for the country."

That would stir up the theater district and fill the "artists' lofts" that are the dream of some city planners. ... Maybe now that Buffalo's renowned alternative galleries are on the move, they may be able to shake off any lingering "dark clouds" of local origin. Back in the clear light of day everybody should be able to see their worth.

Excerpted from Richard Huntington, Buffalo Courier-Express, June 1, 1980.

THE MAIN EVENT

Farther on up the road, downtown may mourn Hallwalls move

It's only a move of three miles up Main Street. But what a difference it will make to downtown.

Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center has been an important part of the arts revival in Buffalo's downtown Theater District. For 13 years the alternative gallery has been presenting an incredibly varied menu of exhibitions, performances, and screenings at 700 Main Street, only a few doors down from Studio Arena Theatre.

By month's end the gallery will be installed in new quarters at the old Trico building [now called the Tri-Main Center] at 2495 Main, a move that is sure to leave a void downtown when all arts organizations are struggling.

Not surprisingly, Hallwalls' decision to move to the city's Central Park district was economically inspired.

"With state and city cuts, our budget has been halved in the past three years," says Hallwalls Executive Director Edmund Cardoni. "The staff was cut in half and the rent kept going up. In the past the city provided sufficient funds to cover the rent. Now, with a 75 percent cut by the city, we are lucky if we can cover two months' rent."

... [T]he Trico building has already made some strides as a potential arts center with the establishment there of the Buffalo Arts Studio. The artists in this collective work and exhibit in the space, and the collective's presence encourages other artists to rent individual studios. These art activities are part of a mix that includes small industrial operations (Trico itself remains on a small scale), commercial photographers and other businesses of varying kinds...

Excerpted from Richard Huntington, The Buffalo News, December 3, 1993.

JAMES GRIFFIN

Mayor of Buffalo, 1977-94

Q: How do you feel about censorship in art?

GRIFFIN: Well, they got this one thing in Buffalo—"Hallways" or whatever the heck it is ... To me that's strictly trash that they put out. And again, getting back to times when I was growing up, some of these things, they'd laugh those people right out of the country; they'd put them in the psychiatric center over there. Who in common sense would do some of the things they're doing?

Mayor Griffin's comments are excerpted from an interview by John Patrick McLean in The Buffalo News, June 21, 1992. The quote was later reprinted on one of Hallwalls' best-selling coffee mugs.

3. MORE IMAGES OF BUFFALO THAN ANY SANE SUBURBANITE WOULD EVER DARE TO FACE

REBECCA HOWLAND
New York, NY

Much of my work has been on environmental concerns. I was born in Niagara Falls, and was very disturbed as the ominous specter of Love Canal unfolded. The "Love Canal Potatoes" were some of my first small multiples, made by a mold taken from an actual potato, found in a corner of my refrigerator. They are made of plaster with rolling eyes. The potatoes were first shown at the Times Square Show gift shop in June 1980. They were displayed with a little sign, "We were born in Love Canal."

I didn't realize until I left how extreme the industrial landscape is in Buffalo. As a first novel is always autobiographical, whether the writer knows it or not, I made images of the landscape of my childhood in great chunks of my early work: Driving back and forth from Kenmore to Grand Island (my parents kept a little boat, "Some Fun," there). Lying in the back seat of the car, watching the electrical transmission towers and oil storage tanks march by. We moved to Clarence when I was 10. The Niagara Escarpment started nearby. I was always conscious of the geology—sedimentary layers and strata—of Niagara Falls crumbling backwards. I can remember going to the Buffalo Science Museum to study the fossils.

When I first moved to New York City I met some of my first New York artists on a visit home to Artpark dur-

BANNON BERTOLO BICE BLUMBERG BRADY BURRIS BUSH CARY CLOUGH CONRAD DAVIS DENSON DICK DWYER EASY GRAPHICS EIERMAN FRANK GEORGIOU GILMAN GISSEN GRIFFIS HAYDUK HELD HENRICH HORNBACKER HOWELL HYRYNIAK JUDKINS KAMKE KING (s) KOTIK KRIMS LEMBERG LONGO LUNDY MICHELAK MUFFOLETTO MURPHY NEAMAN NOBLE O'GRADY PECOT PREISNER PATTERSON PELKA SAVAGE ROSEN SEEHAUSEN SHARITS SHERMAN SMITH STEINATURN WHITE ZWACK

We're coming together because of the weather...

SNOW SHOW

February 12 8 pm Saturday Gala Celebration *
(Activities in the Parking Lot)
Sherman, Eierman, Judkins, Clough, Kamke, Brady
Inside HALLWALLS: BUFFALO is an Island
an opera by Conrad, Lemberg & Longo
Light show: Hyryniah

February 13 8 pm Sunday VIDEO
Steins Burris Gissen Patterson

February 14 8 pm Monday FILM
Bannon Bush Held Hornbacher King

February 15 8 pm Tuesday MIXED MEDIA / FILM
Lune Prodx Seehausen Gilman Denson Murphy

February 16 8 pm Wednesday JACK GRIFFIS SPECIAL
(A Travelogue Extravaganza)

HALLWALLS

CHILLED REFRESHMENTS will be served. Bring your skis!
People are invited to show their work after scheduled events
Ice Escapades!

* 10 show, check, and 1992 CAPS (captioned) Bannan-Burriss presentation. Tickets through door.
* For the Green Show by the Visual Artwork and the "S.E. Show" on the Arts

Hallwalls' response to the "Blizzard of '77."

ing its spectacular days—Suzanne Harris, Gene Highstein, and Richard Nonas. I've lived in New York for 20 years and fly often from Newark Airport. Heading there, I always get the thrill of home, of driving through the ugly/beautiful welter of towers, tankers, and canals.

Visual artist Rebecca Howland's work has been featured in three Hallwalls exhibitions; one of her "Love Canal Potatoes" was included in the 20th Anniversary show. She modified the comments above from an artist's statement for that exhibition.

**DOWNTOWN DEPRESSION,
SUBURBAN HORROR:**

A Festival of Films Spotlighting Buffalo
May 11 & 12, 1990

ROBBIE McCAULEY
New York, NY

The idea for "The Buffalo Project" [a 1990 performance project investigating the aftermath of local unrest in 1967] first occurred to [Robbie] McCauley when, during her first trip to Buffalo in 1988, she was struck by the fact that she didn't see any black people in the downtown area. "There I was," recalls McCauley, "doing a performance about the history of race issues in my own life and how they are related to history in the United States in general, and there were hardly any black people in the audience—which isn't unusual on the performance scene—but I didn't see many black people anywhere in town! I thought, 'What is this, just a very low population of black people, or what?' I started asking questions, and people said, 'Well, the black area is across town.'

More than the reality of racial segregation in Buffalo, McCauley was amazed at the suggestion that the Buffalo riots might have something to do with it. ... "It struck me that an event like that had occurred in upstate New York and that I hadn't heard anything about it, and that whenever I brought it up to anybody in Buffalo there was a lot of feeling about it, but not a willingness to talk about it. In New York or Los Angeles people talk about these things freely ... but in Buffalo I had the feeling that it was something that was covered over. I wondered why, and I sensed that it was something that was still resonating.

... "I think people minimize the importance of [the events of 1967]. I think it was very significant to the lives of people in Buffalo. That the fear of black people by white people in and especially around Buffalo—those people who have escaped—is extreme in ways that you don't hear in other places.

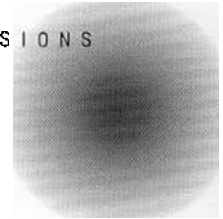
"From the way people talk, you get the feeling that you're going into a wild jungle if you go into the East Side. When you actually go into the East Side you wonder, 'Now, where is the danger that I was supposed to be feeling here?' It's a pleasant atmosphere, and the people are pleasant. It's run down economically, and some places are nice and some are not so nice. But for me, coming from New York where I live in an area in which every kind of thing's going on, I think, 'What's the problem?'"

Beyond the attitudes themselves, McCauley sees material consequences stemming from the communal amnesia over the riots. "Part of the 'not talking about it' is an unwillingness to bring up the extreme reactions, and the fact that the economic progress in the black community stopped," she says. "We know a lot of that came out of the Reagan administration and so forth, and that it affected all cities, but there is a cultural memory in Buffalo about the riots that is full of fear, shame, and denial." ...

Excerpted from Anthony Chase, "Race Riot Revisited," Buffalo Artvoice, July 11, 1990. For more information on "The Buffalo Project," see the chapter "Close Encounters: Artist Residencies."

Downtown Depression, Suburban Horror presents two exhilarating evenings of short works by local filmmakers who have trained their lenses on the city they call, for better or worse, home. Made over the last 30 years, by a wide variety of filmmakers, these gems provide an unusual opportunity for collective self-reflection, with all the pride and the pain, the humor and the humiliation, which such an act always entails. For anyone who has ever lived in Buffalo, or its surrounding environs, this program is a definite "must-see." ... Prepare yourself to traverse all kinds of terrain—geographical, industrial, historical, and aesthetic—from the bowels of Buffalo to the sanitary suburbs, from home-movie reels to slick, professional productions, and from ancient images in black and white to blurry colors and loud noises. With more images of Buffalo than any sane suburbanite would ever dare to face, and a range of films simply dizzying, this festival itself promises to make local history. A celebration not to be missed—don't forget the Advils, Tylenols, or whatever else you may need to last these crazy nights.

Downtown Depression, curated by Jürgen Brünig, included a multimedia installation by Scott Sweeney and Jeff Sherven, works by Lawrence Brose, Terry Klein, Kevin Fix, Anthony Bannon, Bill Brown, Edward J. Heely, Douglas W. Adams, John Christopher, and Don Owen, as well as historical and promotional films by the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society. The text above was excerpted from the May 1990 calendar.



THE SURVIVORS: A Super Bowl Trip Raises Funds for Artists

... Hopping on the Buffalo Bills bandwagon is Hallwalls. The multimedia mecca at 700 Main Street is raffling off an expenses-paid trip for two to the Super Bowl in Tampa, Fla.

"Don Metz, our music curator, came up with the idea over the holidays when we were all on a two-week furlough without pay," says Hallwalls interim executive director Ed Cardoni.

Through their travel agent, they arranged air fare,

ground transportation, three nights in a hotel with breakfast, a pre-game cocktail party and a pair of seats in the end zone—approximate total value, \$3,000. The winner will have plunked down \$20 for a raffle ticket.

... Hallwalls will show the game to raffle ticket holders on its new high-resolution, 12-foot video projection screen, used normally to display video art...

Excerpted from Dale Anderson, The Buffalo News, January 18, 1991.

4. LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION (THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE)

THE NORTH AMERICAN NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL International Perspectives

It would not be too far wide of the mark to suggest that Buffalo approximates, both economically and architecturally, to Liverpool. The fortunes of New York State's second city, however, seem to have begun to turn. There is now an unmistakable optimism in the air, an optimism which was felt keenly in this month's North American New Music Festival, the largest and highest status event of its kind in America...

Excerpted from Stephen Pettitt, "Optimistic Airs: Upstate and Upbeat," The London Times, March 20, 1988.

Buffalo, architecturally an explorable city, is also, as *American Grove* says, "a center of contemporary music in the USA." Many eminent composers, American and foreign, have been resident on the State University of New York campus at Buffalo. The North American New Music Festival is presented by the SUNY Music Department. This year's festival, the sixth, consisted of 10 March days holding 26 events: 16 concerts, 4 late-night cabarets, and 6 "encounters," at which composers—among them Elliott Carter, John Cage, and Lou Harrison—discussed their work.

... The late afternoon concert was given in Hallwalls, a shabby, black-hued performing space, without windows: a hot, serious, unpretentious but almost defiantly graceless room, which insulates what happens within it from the world outside and invites concentration on nothing but the art...

Excerpted from Andrew Porter, "Musical Events: Two Festivals," The New Yorker, April 18, 1978.

KEIKO SEI
Prague

LIVING IN "B" CITIES

Learning that I live in "B" cities, American people say they have Boston for me. The condition of the "B" city is that the city must begin with a capital B and have a future but remain somehow in class "B." "So it could be Boston," they say. Yet nobody mentions Buffalo, NY. Even the people of Buffalo hesitate to recommend their city. They say that the city has only been declining since the early part of the century. This is what I like about Buffalo and its people: no frills, no show, honest and modest. So are the media projects from the city that I've seen.

Although I've known quite a few media artists from Buffalo, it wasn't until the *Infermental* project that I got to know about Hallwalls. Chris Hill, then the video curator of the center, together with Tony Conrad, Peter Weibel and Rotraut Pape made the *Infermental 7/Buffalo* edition in 1987. I was in Tokyo at that time and made the following *Infermental 8/Tokyo* with Alfred Birnbaum. The Tokyo editorial group received something like 120 tapes from Buffalo that they couldn't use and sent on. It must have been the beginning of my rather intimate relationship with Buffalo, when I look back now. Then I started discovering that a lot of my interests in media were shared by artists and curators in Buffalo. Most significantly, I run the Central European Tesla Fan Club, and of course people in Buffalo feel very close to Nikola Tesla. I've been looking forward to Steve Gallagher and Henry Jesionka's film about him.

"Buffalo is Romania in America!" daringly announced Chris Hill. By then I'd learned enough about Buffalo to understand why she felt attached to Eastern Europe. We have since collaborated for a couple of exchange projects between the U.S. and Eastern Europe. The tapes she brought for screenings in Eastern Europe were mostly unpretentious and somewhat humorous attempts at revealing "the other side of media," and were, and will be, well-received in the former totalitarian societies. To me those media projects from Buffalo are like a naked machine without any fancy cover. Probably the city itself is like that. It has its own beauty and I can't help being attracted by its charm. One day I may have to go and see if it could become one of my "B" cities. People say that any tape can be shown in the city, as they have Hallwalls and the public access channel. That's wonderful—I shall bring the tapes I have problems showing anywhere else.

Independent curator Keiko Sei has screened tapes at Hallwalls, and collaborated with the video curators there on many international projects. (The part of Prague where she now lives begins with the letter "B.") Her comments here are taken from a 1995 statement written for this publication.

ANNA KAARINA NENONEN
Buffalo

The plane lands in Buffalo. All my life I have worked very hard to get out of Finland, and now this. In Finland the snow falls in gentle flakes as in Hollywood Christmas scenes, and as it hits the ground government-run snowploughs come to clear it away. The Buffalo airport is moaning in the grips of a spectacular blizzard and as I leave the overheated luggage claim area a gust of wind hits me in the face with a bucketful of icy hail. Against all odds I make it downtown. When I open my eyes again, the sky is blue and clear and the temperature has dropped to a level which in Finland was last experienced during the Winter War. I find a copy of *Artvoice* and brace myself to face the weather again. Hallwalls is a couple of hundred yards from where I am staying on Main Street. It is a cramped, unpretentious space, a screaming contrast to the crass commercialism of California. There is nothing of the brightly colored hotel art that my weary eyes had been forced to absorb a few days earlier. Some of the art at Hallwalls clearly has no other intention than to shock, some of it has a heavy agenda, some of it is even beautiful in a gritty sort of way. Some of it looks as if somebody was cleaning his garage and dumped the rubbish into the gallery—silly and derivative, perhaps, but at least it triggers a reaction. I go down there again, and in the members' exhibit I recognize the names of two New York artists. So this is where they started! Sara [Kellner] looks at some of my pieces and asks me to come and help stitch a heap of brassieres together into an artwork. I wriggle out of the invitation but I am flattered that she asked. I begin to think there is, after all, life in America.

Anna Kaarina Nenonen is a Finnish visual artist who now lives in Buffalo. Her comments here are excerpted from a longer statement written for this publication in 1994.

DAVID ROCHE
Toronto

Hallwalls takes in Southern Ontario as part of its catchbasin area. Far from an example of U.S. cultural imperialism, it feels rather like an expression of solidarity. We're all in this same parallel-gallery / artist-run-space circuit together. If anything, I sense that the Buffalo arts community reveres Toronto as the nearest metropolis, with all the blandishments that one of the bigger flesh pots can offer: art films, alternative music, and Canadian beer not among the least of them. By contrast, never underestimate the penis envy we can and do have for Things American—operating even, in my case, on a shopping level at AM&A's and the K-Mart on Hertel.

Canadian performance artist David Roche performed at each of the first three biannual "Ways In Being Gay" festivals, and made numerous friendly visits and shopping expeditions to Buffalo at other times. His comments here are adapted from a statement written for this publication.

LAURA MCGOUGH
Washington, D.C.

VIDEO AS GEOGRAPHY

Mark Twain, who lived for a bit in Buffalo, once posited that Niagara Falls was the location of the original Garden of Eden. Western New York has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. The Walden Galleria Mall and Love Canal are tourist attractions. Lily Dale, a community composed entirely of spiritualists, psychics and their families, is less than one hour south of Buffalo. I mention all this because as I begin to draw a mental map of Hallwalls, with all its connecting and intersecting points of arrival and departure, I become even more convinced that the old adage "geography is everything" is true. I am even able to develop a maxim or two of my own based on this theory. For example, artists and curators living in Buffalo are far enough away from New York City to happily develop their own scene(s) regardless of, or even oblivious to, the City's latest art trends, but still close enough to carry an upstate chip on their collective shoulders.

Of course after I moved I found that Washington, D.C. has its own mixture of odd geographical references (where is the Tidewater, anyhow?). I became even more convinced that geography is indeed everything. Actually, it was Hank

Burchard's review of Gary Hill's retrospective at the Hirshhorn that made me a believer. Burchard offered the following backhanded compliment to Hill at the expense of video as an art form in general: "Gary Hill makes it a little harder to be indifferent to video art, but only for an hour or so ... This is not the clarion, undeniable wake-up call we've been fearing, the one that will force us to pay respectful attention to video art..."

I was angered and disappointed by these statements, but I also felt ... directionless. In D.C. video may be the electronic equivalent of terra incognita, but in Buffalo that map had already been drawn by a visionary group of media cartographers long before I migrated south from Buffalo. In 1995 video artists screening their tapes at Hallwalls, Squeaky Wheel or SUNY Buffalo are not required to legitimize the art form they practice to members of the press, or, ever since the retirement of former mayor Jimmy Griffin, to politicians. Location, location, location.

Laura McGough was Hallwalls' video curator from 1992-93. Her remarks here are taken from a written statement contributed in 1995.

ROB DANIELSON
Milwaukee

I've been trying to find an hour or two to sit down and write about what makes Hallwalls really valuable—but I know it would take much longer to justly articulate. Frankly, it is still wondrous to me how so many people have wanted to pull together for such a long time with collective accomplishment as the chief reward. I often pretend I'm really from Buffalo.

Actually, I grew up in a '50s era suburban section of Oklahoma City very close to an old train stop sign that said "Nowers" on both sides. (Nothing is particularly "old" in Oklahoma City: it was settled in one day). I remember riding past that sign every Sunday on the way to and from church, but I guess I never asked a word about it.

During my second year of graduate school in Chicago, while browsing in a used bookstore, I came across a small collection of poems with a photograph of

that sign on the cover. I was stunned. In the first line of the first poem, the poet claimed to be from "Nowers"—a train stop said to be named by an "old" hobo who had to sleep in "no where" on occasion. Since around the time of that recognition, I've always felt peculiar and distant when visiting my childhood home. It truly does feel like "no where" more than any other place I've known.

Almost 20 years ago I settled down in Milwaukee. I really don't travel that much, and for some reason whenever I do, it's either to Buffalo or Nowers.

People who live in Buffalo say they feel at home in Milwaukee, and vice versa. But I've found nothing like Hallwalls in Milwaukee—a fact that often makes me sad. Someday, I'd like to feel able to say that I agree that Milwaukee IS like Buffalo. I hope that I'm learning to read the signs.

Video and performance artist Rob Danielson has presented work at Hallwalls many times. He and collaborator Terese Agnew created the installation "Salvage Lounge" (discussed in Elizabeth Licata's essay on the Exhibitions program and the chapter "Close Encounters: Artist Residencies") in 1988. His comments here are adapted from a 1994 letter.

5. MAKE IT UP AS YOU GO ALONG (THE VIEW FROM INSIDE)

DAVID KULIK
Dorchester, MA

Great things I remember about Buffalo:

- Hallwalls & CEPA and the people therein
- The Albright-Knox
- UB
- Seeing the B-52's, John Cale, and Alex Chilton at McVan's
- Seeing Lydia Lunch w/8-Eyed Spy and The Bush Tetrads at Gabel's
- Playing (w/The Vores) at all the above places and more
- Seeing George (the band w/George Scherer, Brian Szpakowski, etc.) anywhere they played
- Driving to Toronto to see Pere Ubu
- Whiteouts on the Skyway
- Wings at Mr. Goodbar

- Getting everywhere via bicycle (except in winter)
- Paying \$150/month for a huge apt. on 7th Street

Not-so-great things I remember about Buffalo:

- Unemployment at 13%
- Nobody bought art
- Two bicycles stolen
- Tire iron to the head (on Elmwood Ave after Bush Tetrads gig)
- Ice boom stayed up until June

David Kulik, one of the founding members of legendary Buffalo punk band The Vores, worked at both Hallwalls (as performance curator) and CEPA from 1977-83. His comments here were adapted from e-mail to Ron Ehmke, 1995.

HOW TO HAVE FUN IN BUFFALO

... "I think there are a lot of non-art people interested in being around art, in an environment where they don't know what will happen, except they know it'll be something good," says Tony Billoni, a musician and performance artist who curated performance art shows at Hallwalls for two years.

... Cabaret 650 [a Theater District nightclub up the block from Hallwalls in the mid-1980s] is the latest organization to open itself to this kind of pursuit [the first annual "Artists and Models Affair" organized by Billoni's How to Have Fun organization]. Others have come and gone through the years. At one time, it was McVan's, that battered ex-speakeasy in Black Rock-Riverside, now closed. Then it was The Continental, which continues to present new bands playing original music, though it's retreated from the cutting edge of invention.

... The urge to move from the galleries to the clubs reflects a dynamic that got underway here in the '70s, when artists short-cut around the city's old, established cultural fixtures and founded new ones of their own. Now that places like Hallwalls, the CEPA Gallery and Media Study/Bufalo have become major organizations themselves, artists have begun looking further to find the fertile fringes on the frontier of ideas.

"It seems in recent years, people are more willing to look at change as an essential part of Buffalo and to make an investment in youth," says Tony Conrad, a video artist and instructor at UB's Center for Media Studies whose experience reaches back to New York City's avant-garde scene in the '60s.

"... There seems to be a tremendous alertness among the children of the suburbs and the city's middle class," he continues. They have their eyes open. They want to find out what they're going to do and they're uneasy about accepting the Buffalo story as it is. They want to be sure if they go somewhere else that they're going to be good. So it's important that they make it happen here. They're willing to take chances, do things, be alert to others.

"In New York City," he adds, "young artists are more reluctant, more aware that they're playing the Big Game. Here they're alert to the games, but they know they're not really supported by a market. They have a chance to take risks and enjoy an environment where a lot of experimentation can take place.

"I think the next few years are going to be very strange," he reckons. "You've got the subway opening, the downtown development, the electronic revolution, a sense of the realities that are going to hit us soon. And, in a way, the community is realigning its vision to meet them.

"Recently there's been a lot of openness, an enormous circle of stuff that's mixing together and a lot of connections that have come into being for a short while, like flashes. I don't think this is the same Buffalo as four years ago."

Excerpted from Dale Anderson, "New Wave Artlife," The Buffalo News, May 13, 1984

... "Our purpose is to overcome boredom," says Steve Gallagher, a native New Yorker who works with How to Have Fun and who succeeded Billoni as curator of performance art at Hallwalls in 1981. "Otherwise," he suggests, pointing to a bottle of beer, "this is probably the biggest form of entertainment in Buffalo."

This craving for an appropriate aesthetic environment has impelled Buffalo artists to create their own galleries and support system over the past couple of decades. ... How to Have Fun is one of that community's most flamboyant expressions; and, like all that happens in the arts here, it's surprisingly sophisticated and especially conversant with what's happening in New York City.

For many Buffalo artists, New York is the sun, the moon, and all the stars in the sky. An hour away via a cut-rate plane ride, its lure is overwhelming. And so is its influence.

"Our relationship to New York has been a complicated one over the years," says Tony Conrad. ... "Buffalo's a big enough town that it doesn't need to concede much. It can do the things it needs to do right here," he proposes as he sits in the storefront headquarters of Squeaky Wheel, a video artists center which he has helped to get established.

"We're not like Chicago or San Francisco or Toronto," Conrad says. "We don't need to compete with New York, so we can relate to it very strongly."

... "Hallwalls takes much greater risks in exhibiting than the galleries in New York or the museums," says painter Catherine Howe, exhibition curator at Hallwalls. "We show people who are emerging. We bring in artists from other parts of the country, artists you wouldn't see except in New York, but we also feel we have to foster the growth of artists working in Buffalo.

"There may be no market here, but at least they can have a meaningful context in which to show their work. On one level, Hallwalls is made up of a lot of people beginning their careers who are interested in doing things to help their own work. But it's something you can't do forever, because you'd starve. It's not the kind of job you can be comfortable with. The unexpected is a daily factor. But at the same time, it's a wonderful opportunity for growth."

Excerpted from Dale Anderson, "What's New with the Avant-Garde?," Buffalo Magazine, The Buffalo News, August 2, 1987. In 1994, its tenth anniversary year, Tony Billoni turned over control of the Artists and Models Affair to Hallwalls as an annual fundraiser.



Joint CEPA/Hallwalls party, Sept. 4, 1979

KEVIN HOSEY Buffalo

This may sound corny, but Hallwalls was actually more than just an arts center when I first became aware of it; it was a sign of hope. I grew up in the Buffalo suburb of Depew, not exactly a hotbed of creativity, arts or any media (music, academic, performance) in or out of the mainstream; Johnny Carson was thought of as a dangerous, out-of-control television personality, and the Catholic Church was the center of most activities. The earliest memory I have of Hallwalls was reading and, during my first year of college, hearing teachers and other students talk about what went on there. It seemed it might be what I was looking for, somewhere the arts could be out of the everyday and be alive. It was—sometimes, but not all the time.

Kevin Hosey covers cultural events for several Buffalo publications, including Sacred Cow, Night-Life, and the Amherst Bee. His comments here are adapted from e-mail to Ronald Ehmke, 1995.

ROBERLEY BELL Buffalo, New York

Before moving to Buffalo 8 years ago, there were a couple of things I knew it was the home of:

1. winter,
2. the Albright-Knox, and
3. Hallwalls.

Having lived other places where the non-profit space was an integral part of the arts community, I looked forward to a similar relationship with Hallwalls. Over the course of time I have grown dependent on knowing that Buffalo has such an art space as HW. And over the course of time I have seen it emerge as a strong art center representing a diverse range of ideas and programs, reaching out to a wider and more varied audience. Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of the programming is the service to the community by bringing together people of varying backgrounds and interests.

The one exhibition I was involved was *The Abortion Project*, a show that touched many of us at home as it took place while this city was under fire by the pro-life movement. The sense of community that was developed through that exhibition and related events demonstrated the power that the arts have to bring people together.

The arts-in-education programming taking place of late is again a wonderful example of how Hallwalls builds a community through educating young people. Most recently the Artist Residency Exchange:Western New York (ARE:WNY) program, which Sara [Kellner] has been instrumental in developing, brings funding to our area. Having been involved in the first year of the grant, I saw firsthand how hard Sara worked to develop a program that would directly serve artists and at the same time serve the place we call home.

Visual artist Roberley Bell's comments here are excerpted from a 1994 letter.

MATTHEW ISAAC SCHWONKE
Buffalo

**IN, AROUND, AND AFTERTHOUGHTS
(ON HALLWALLS):
BUFFALO IN TWO INADEQUATE
DESCRIPTIVE SYSTEMS**

(with apologies to Martha Rosler)

"WHERE ARE ALL THE PEOPLE?"

My first experience with Buffalo was in early 1987. I was 16 years old, and came to look at SUNY Buffalo, most likely the university I would be attending that Fall. My father and I drove from Utica for an orientation tour for prospective undergraduates, and I distinctly remember my initial feelings of horror when viewing the university's Amherst Campus.

We sat in the parking lot at the University at Buffalo's enormous, lego-like undergraduate housing dormitories (a clear demonstration of the failure of late modern architecture), the "Ellicott Complex"—which sounds more like a psychological disorder than a place you'd want to live. I simply refused to leave the car to enter the intimidating, overbearing structure to take the orientation tour (welcome to the "City of Good Neighbors"). As it turned out, I chose not to attend UB that year, but returned in 1989, after transferring from another school.

I have lived in Buffalo over six years now. I initially felt feelings of excitement and intrigue about the city, and even became somewhat of a defender of Buffalo for a period. These feelings soon dissipated. Over the following years, the things that precipitated my current antipathy toward the city included: the weather, the nearly fascist obsession with sports, the lack of communal public spaces (except for the quasi-public suburban malls), a university largely detached from the rest of the community, and, perhaps most significantly, the vast unrecognition of Buffalo's rich and diverse cultural institutions. I find it disheartening that while many friends and colleagues in New York and other areas of the country are familiar with both Hallwalls and CEPA, many people in Buffalo still need an explanation as to what these places are and what they do. While this may be due, somewhat, to our own public relations failings, I believe it indicates a much greater lack of appreciation for their existence.

Buffalo is a city poorly planned, a city of missed oppor-

tunities, and a city of "What Ifs": "What if the new campus of the university had been built downtown, rather than in an isolated location in the suburbs? What if the subway really did take you somewhere? What if the Bills had won the Super Bowl?"

I always feel a bit uncomfortable when I show visiting artists or filmmakers the city, as if I'm a de facto advocate for something I really don't believe in. Generally, their reactions are equally tepid. While showing Rosa von Praunheim Buffalo in 1994, he noted downtown's empty, often pedestrian-less streets by repeatedly asking me, "Where are all the people?" Monika Treut, after several drinks, told me to leave Buffalo as soon as possible, adding: "If I had to live here, I'd become a junkie."

abandoned

dying

despondent

poor

cold

unemployed

desperate



Matthew Schwonke was Hallwalls' film programmer from 1994 to 1995 and the Special Projects/Education Coordinator for CEPA from 1993 to the present. He constructed this photo essay in 1995.

JULIA DZWONKOSKI
The Institute

I grew up in Rochester, NY, which is only an hour east of Buffalo, and I would make the mistake of telling people from other states that I was "from New York," which they immediately assumed meant New York City. Even after I explained that it was Rochester, New York, it was always the same thing: "Wow, so you live near the City; what's it like?" or "I went to New York City once." It got pretty tiresome, so for a while I just avoided these kinds of conversations. Now I tell people I'm from Buffalo and they say: "Buffalo— isn't that near Canada or something?" It's a great moment, because you could say anything. Not that lying about where you're from is any great thrill. It's more that you have the option of rendering the city from your own point of view, and not having to compete with some fantasy brochure of what it's like to live here. In other words, you can make it up as you go along. And this goes for living and working and making work here.

Julia Dzwonkoski was Hallwalls' video curator from 1994-95. She is currently "curator of fog" at The Institute, a private, non-funded production and presentation space somewhere in Buffalo.

AARON LERCHER
Buffalo, NY

O Buffalo! The city remains, although the reasons for building it here are gone. They say ships still dock beside the ruins of your grain elevators, but who notices? Buffalo, you are famous for the toxic waste left by your dismantled factories, but not so famous as your neighbor to the north, Niagara Falls. You are not represented in Congress, having been gerrymandered out of existence, divided between suburban districts to the north and south. The only reason for there being a city here is that there already is a city here: the hundred-year-old two-family houses, painted either parti-color to set off the ornamental trim in pink or purple, or else black all over.

I came to Buffalo 10 years ago to study philosophy in graduate school. But the university is out in the suburbs. For me, graduate school has been more like mental illness than a career, but I can't say that to my family. This has been the period of Republican ascendancy, the Reagan years from which 1992 now seems to have been a false dawn. Their bombast grips my gullible

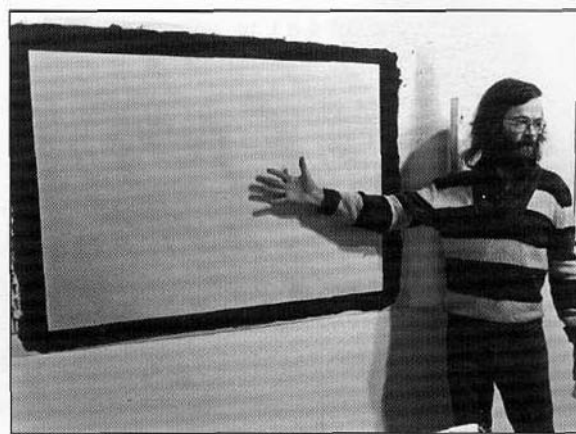
mind. It's inexhaustible. I can't shut it off: Star Wars, Gulf War, freedom fighters, winds of freedom, magic of the marketplace, welfare queens, quota queens, family values, boat people, read my lips, no new taxes, and build more prisons.

There is a myth that art in some way embodies unrealizable hopes and inexpressible fears. The myth says that artists are the legislators of this unacknowledged world. You can't possibly believe that bullshit! But I only believe in ideas that have already been refuted. This is why I believe in Hallwalls. It's something solid, a 20-year Buffalo institution that could just as soon be gone tomorrow: wiped out by Jesse Helms's next hysterical fit. It's something you can believe in; something you should support generously.

Writer/mathematician Aaron Lercher has appeared at Hallwalls many times, most notably as one of five "Eltons" in the performance "Elton John: The Rock Opera." He wrote the ode above in late 1994.

SCHOOL'S OUT ART AND THE ACADEMY

Buffalo doesn't function much like a college town, despite the presence of several universities, most notably two SUNY schools. But UB and Buffalo State College have played key roles in attracting painters, writers, mediamakers, and composers to the city, both as students and as faculty members. The ambivalence the first generation of Hallwalls artists felt toward formal education has been echoed by countless successors; indeed, there is a long tradition of disenfranchised Media Studies, Art, and English graduate students stumbling into curatorial positions. At the same time, however, certain university departments have worked closely with Hallwalls' programmers, sharing resources on ambitious projects like the annual North American New Music Festival and a number of presentations by visiting writers and media artists. In its impatience with established canons, its openness to interdisciplinary experimentation, and its embrace of concepts which have not (yet) gained academic validation, the organization has served as an alternative education for many people.



Tony Conrad, circa mid-'70s

DAVID BENDERS (*current Program Director at WBFO, SUNY Buffalo's public radio station*): I think what everyone would say about the 60s into the 70s around Buffalo is that there was a huge amount of creative activity, from the creation of the UB English department to the UB campus student protests (I'm thinking about Kent State—also the anniversary of my arrest on Main Street) to the Arts Today Festival put together by Lukas Foss ('65) on up to Hallwalls.

Don't forget the underground press—seems we were always writing for, printing, spreading around different community alternative papers. At that time I think we were a little more active pulling the alternative media together under one "consciousness"/awareness/whatever.

My connection to Hallwalls was all through Judy Treible, who worked at WBFO putting out graphics and the program guide. I was the UUAB (at UB, culture activities board) director and I hired Judy to operate Gallery 219 on the second floor of Norton (Squire) Hall. She supported the arts by hiring Clough and Longo and other Hallwalls starving artists to be gallery "guards"!

I have a copy of [Judy's] poster for the WBFO garage sale at the old Ice house facility on Essex [and] a WBFO program guide (July/Aug. '73) with at least one Charlie Clough photo in it... and photos by Joe Hryvniak... Terry Gross landed in Buffalo and WBFO somewhere around here, too; she was also friends with Treible. The connections are very likely endless!

[culled from e-mail exchanges with Ron Ehmke, May 1995]

JUDY TREIBLE: WBFO was a hotbed of new ideas. It had an open format; most of the staff was volunteer and people could pretty much program what they wanted. I first got involved with the station doing a weekly natural foods show. One night, desperate to fill my half hour, I convinced Charlie Clough to come on and discuss the differences between Oreos and Hydrox. Charlie started talking, we opened the phones and had a zany 30 minutes. Other memorable moments: a 24-hour celebration of March 8th, International Women's Day, with an all-woman on-air and tech staff [featuring] a live production of Gertrude Stein's opera; Gary Storm, the eclectic all-night guy; a staff Thanksgiving dinner held in Studio A and broadcast live.

UB's musical incubator, the Creative Associates, attracted the likes of Terry Riley, Petr Kotik and Julius Eastman. The CAs

put on wonderfully dissonant concerts in the Albright-Knox auditorium that were big social events with matrons rubbing elbows with blue-jeaned hipsters. I designed the concert and recital posters for several seasons and it was very exciting to be around the seven or eight musicians who had CA Fellowships each year.

Veterans of student protests changed the face of UB government by doing such things as disbanding the football team and using its budget to start a campus daycare center.

[culled from e-mail to Ron Ehmke, February 1995]

MICHAEL ZWACK: I remember in my junior and senior years of college [at Buffalo State, 1970-71] it was closed a lot of the time because people had taken over the administration building. You didn't really have your final studio stuff because the school was closed. And so you met your teacher someplace and tried to remember what work you were making. That was the way the grades went. It wasn't a very happy time for me. I wasn't an overtly political person so I wasn't... active in any of that stuff. Finally, when we were all there at Hallwalls, it was like this new kind of little community based around art.

[interview with Anthony Bannon, September 1993]

CHARLES CLOUGH: I went to Pratt for a year and the Ontario College of Art for a year and came back to Buffalo thinking that, you know, I could educate myself, and that I would do this by way of magazines and going to artists' studios, and I guess try to establish some kind of relationships with the artists I admired, whether it's a mentor kind of thing, or friendship, or whatever. The fact that [UB's Center for Media Study] was employing these people whose work I was reading about in *Artforum*, that was a root to what seemed to me to be the front lines of culture.

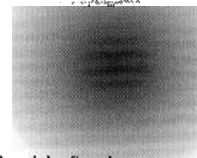
I did go to school at UB, but I never enrolled, I never paid tuition. I went directly to the teachers and said, "Do you mind if I sit in on your class?" And the people that I did this with, like [Hollis] Frampton and [Paul] Sharits and maybe—well, I think Tony Conrad came later—they said, "Sure, come in and sit in on my class."

... Sitting in on Frampton's class, for example, he would talk about his friends Rosenquist and Andre and Frank Stella and so on, and he made the life of the artist vivid to me, the life of the artists who I admired and wanted to emulate, so it gave me a sense of proximity and familiarity. It wasn't so much a theoretical thing. It was, how do these guys talk together, guys and women? How do they pursue their intentions, get their work done, get their work shown, and stuff like that? And they talked about what they read, so that was something that was important to me. I wanted to read what they read. And it helped me to locate a community in Buffalo of like-minded people.

[interview with Anthony Bannon, September 1993]

TONY CONRAD (*media maker, composer, and professor at SUNY Buffalo*): Paul Sharits sent me over to Hallwalls; he loved their brash vitality and open good nature. When I got there—and it was hard to find, over on Essex Street, if you were new to Buffalo—they were more "clubby" than I was used to; not only that, but professors and international media makers hardly got a moment's notice. Everybody was too busy "hanging out," eating spaghetti or planning a pig roast, or wandering around the "halls" and making work for the "walls." Like the grudging respect you feel for jewel thieves, practical jokers, computer hackers, and income tax dodgers, there was something enchanted about the mob of young Buff State artists who pored over *Artforum*, landed some State Council dough, and then called up their favorite artists on the phone and ordered them up like so many pizzas.

They were less open with me about their own work at first; I was excited when Robert said his big new sculpture



piece was finally ready, and I could take a look at it. What a disappointment. A chest-high upside-down shark's fin, in polychromed cast aluminum—like a "Hairy Who" sculpture gone limp. Worse yet, there, struggling up out of the irregular mass, was a series of little equestrian figures. Small men, mounted on horses, rising out of the fin stump. I wanted to say something encouraging. "Hmmm!"

Robert explained cheerily that his idea was related to a movie he'd seen. Really dumb, I thought. Let me explain that the whole idea of art, for me, was intimately bonded to the idea of an oppositional alternative to the dominant consumer culture—bonded by my family heritage, by generational identification with the '60s, and by my own deepest political sense. For me, an independent filmmaker, "the movies" was the dumbest possible source to choose for art making!

I had held some high hopes for the crowd at Hallwalls; they seemed enthused by the deeper issues of art. Still, their offhandedness (or perhaps naiveté?) and their devotion to hanging out and eating with the famous guests from New York (and each other) clearly stood in the way of their getting anywhere intellectually rewarding. More than that, Robert confided to me loftily that he liked "dumb" art. Cindy started making imitation movie stills! Dumb and dumber.

Myself, I was striving to eviscerate the formalist heritage from my own work. Like them, I took critical writing seriously; I went so far as to decide that critics and artists ought to be indistinguishable; that criticism and writing should merge. Apply art strategies to critical writing! I began to design images that were about criticizing, about power; about being enmeshed in power relations with the work. How long did it take for me to realize I was arriving at a lot of the same places as the younger artists at Hallwalls? It helped when an unknown young visiting critic, David Salle, started talking about how good art should feel that it doesn't need you; it helped when an unknown young visiting sculptor, Sherrie Levine, installed "Dogs and Triangles," a piece so completely inane that only a completely brilliant artist could have invented it. It also helped when my own images began to be so dumb that almost everybody walked out of "Hail the Fallen" at the Collective for Living Cinema in 1981; the underground filmmakers, the artist filmmakers, even the punk filmmakers—nobody stomachs it! My best film, no doubt.

I wasn't the only one who swept forward on the winds of change that Hallwalls blew. Out there in Buffalo there's a whole buried generation of revolutionary '70s and '80s artists ([Barbara] Lattanzi, [Eric] Jensen, [Debra] Jencks) whose work has not been served by the self-promotional genius and cosmopolitan market conditions that have nurtured the New York expatriates. Decades later, a familiar smoothing-over effect has set in. Now, highly intelligent critics are seen as having been hand in glove with these same Hallwalls artists. Now, it appears that there was something brilliant, intellectually crisp, academically resonant, in the mesh between Sherman or Longo and Barthes or Foucault. And recently, Hallwalls has gotten smarter, too. It has turned its energies to important social questions and broader constituencies, incidentally giving the State Council much more bang for their buck.

Yes, Hallwalls is smarter—and less "alternative," too, perhaps. "Hmmm!"

[written statement, 1995]

ANTHONY BANNON: Was Media Study important to you?

CINDY SHERMAN: I think what was important was being around the filmmakers and seeing the films. I don't know if I would have naturally sought something out to be part of if I wasn't involved in Hallwalls and near something like Media Study. I know that it had a really strong effect on me. I'm more interested in films, I think, than I am in art on a certain level. Knowing that history, which I was able to get a sense of through going to a lot of screenings there, it was really inspiring.

AB: The structural stuff, as well?

CS: Yeah, even though it was really basic, it was making me aware that film, like painting or like photography, can be used as a way to say something that is non-linear or that's totally abstract or unthought of before. For me it was like a deconstruction of everything that I went to art school with, this idea of the tradition of painting...

AB: Was there anybody that was any good for you at art school?

CS: No, not at school. Hallwalls was really the education I had, nobody at school.

AB: You were at Buffalo State?

CS: Yeah. I mean, my first photography teacher, Barbara Jo [Revelle] was good. I think what was important with her was that I had failed my first photography course and when I had to make it up, she was the person I got. ... She said, "Here, think of conceptual art." She, I think, showed some conceptual art to the class, I guess, so I was able to forget about learning about the print quality and exposure and all that stuff and just concentrate on what it is I want to say. She definitely made things click.

[interview with Anthony Bannon, July 1993]

MICHAEL ZWACK: I wasn't at school with Robert [Longo] or Cindy [Sherman]; I didn't know them there. ... Actually it was [Buffalo State illustration teacher] Mark Fisher who suggested that I check out Ashford Hollow. [Also at Buff State] was the design teacher, George Marzak. I kind of interacted with him because he was the first teacher who came to see my work and asked me to come and see his work. It was like an exchange as opposed to just a teacher thing.

Charlie [Clough] was another person who had a studio at Ashford Hollow. I had met a bunch of people who had studios there. Somehow Charlie and I got along; we had similar kinds of ideas about things. We were kind of unaffiliated; a lot of people there were affiliated with the educational system. They kind of represented academia in a way, where Charlie and a few other people were just rogues. I think that's why we hooked up.

[interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994]

JOSEPH PICCILLO (*artist, Buffalo State College professor frequently cited by Hallwalls' founders as supportive of their work*): It was a wonderful group of people, loaded with talent, energy, and ambition. The wonder of it all was that there were so many, and that they had a grand sense of commitment. They (the originals) still are a wonderful group today—even more talented, just as energized, and still ambitious.

[letter, November 1994]

JOHN MAGGIOTTO (*artist; Hallwalls director, 1978-79*): On my résumé under the heading "Education," I list my post-graduate study as "Hallwalls, 1977-79."

My interest in photography at UB led me to take art history courses as a prelude to switching majors. Jack Quinan taught a contemporary art course which I hoped would explain the Modern Art collection at the Albright-Knox. I loved the Clyfford Stills, but I had no clue as to why they were art. Jack picked up where the survey courses left off and brought me up to date. He assigned visits to this avant-garde place down on Essex Street. I lived around the corner from Hallwalls on Richmond Avenue. Jack suggested we go there at least once during the semester; I went every week. By May of that semester Jack was inviting Charlie and Robert to guest lecture.

[written statement, 1995]

STEVEN SWARTZ (*composer, band member*): Although it was UB that brought me to Buffalo, I think that Hallwalls was really the most rewarding institution of my five years there.

...I arrived in 1978 to study composition with Morton Feldman in UB's doctoral program. I had always had a strong interest in the visual arts, accompanied by the usual fantasies about living a bohemian life in the company of brilliantly talented people... And [Morton] Feldman was constantly telling stories of New York in the early '50s, when some of the century's greatest composers, painters, choreographers and poets were drinking and sleeping together, creating alliances, getting into feuds, and, yes, exchanging ideas.

But in spite of our guru's example, few of my composition students seemed interested in having anything to do with painters or poets or choreographers. I dunno, maybe they were too busy studying or something. Not to mention the grand imperative of grad school, which is to specialize, to narrow one's focus. No matter: I was determined to follow my teacher's example and plunge into a stimulating "scene"—if only I could find one.

That was a bit tricky to begin with. Hallwalls was hardly a secret, yet tucked away on the West Side it wasn't all that accessible to a careless and clueless UB student. A few months after my arrival, I finally did meet someone who was hip to the place: artist/musician/wisecracker Bill Orcutt, who was to become my nearly inseparable pal for the next five years... Through him, I met a wider range of artists and musicians, leading me away from the UB music department (as social nexus, anyway) and toward Hallwalls. ... I felt at home there immediately, although (because?) Music was a pretty incidental part of its programming. One nice thing about it was its welcoming atmosphere. Sure, there were cliques. But Hallwalls seemed willing to embrace career-minded and marginal artists alike. It seemed as if no matter what you were doing, if it was any good at all, you'd eventually get a chance to show or do it there.

... Feldman often said that the most important thing he got from Cage was permission, the license to follow his inclinations into new territory. If you were doing something at Hallwalls, it had to be good, since a healthy chunk of the arts community would be checking you out. Hallwalls was permissive in that Feldmanesque sense of the word, encouraging everyone who came in contact with the place to try new things.

[written statement, 1995]

BRUCE ADAMS (*artist, teacher, 10-year member of Artists Advisory Board, current board member*): By the early '80s, I was halfway to my goal of becoming a successful contemporary artist while earning a living as a teacher. I had received a masters degree in art education, obtained NYS teaching certification and had been granted tenure in the Tonawanda public school system. I was teaching art, and now it was time to concentrate on producing it. The problem was, I knew little about art, especially contemporary art.

I had long since decided to give up any hope of artistic fame, opting instead to continue living in Buffalo with a job, home and family. "Success" for me would be producing relevant (a popular word at the time) work and having it viewed. However, while college had prepared me to mix lump-free papier-mâché, it hadn't particularly encouraged me to learn much about the subject I was licensed to teach. Art by real, living artists was seldom mentioned. Art history was scant. Art criticism, outside the analysis of formal properties, was never discussed.

There was a murky world of contemporary art ahead, and I was about to wade into it. In the years that followed, Hallwalls offered a window into that world, one that was admittedly not always perfectly transparent, but provided direction and stimulation that not only improved my art, but—unexpectedly—my teaching as well.

[written statement, 1994]

CATHERINE HOWE (*artist; Exhibitions curator, 1985-89*): I was this young artist who had just finished my degree at SUNY Buffalo. The idea of moving to New York was looming large in front of me and I really didn't feel like I was ready to do it. I was inexperienced, naive. The formal education I had didn't really prepare me. I had no real mentors. I fought with one of my painting teachers a lot. The fighting and contention helped me gravitate toward Hallwalls, because I didn't feel I was getting what I needed in that university, although I was getting good literature and philosophy courses—it is a good university, but it wasn't enough.

... Hallwalls was this think tank, where there were always people coming and going, performing. It was such an idealistic time... It more than helped me; it allowed me to mature into something that I couldn't have been based on my SUNY Buffalo education. ... It helped me learn a way to live and to think as an artist. I tell people here [in New York City] I got my education at Hallwalls, not college. How many people fresh out of school get the opportunity to fly to New York and go to other artist's studios and get to know them right away, because you can do something for them? I went from knowing ten artists in Buffalo to about a hundred.

[interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994]

CHARLES WRIGHT (*Exhibitions curator, 1989-91*): After reading curatorial essays for a long time, I've begun to approach them with a much more interrogatory attitude. I think it comes of being back at a university. You read a lot of stuff and then you go back out into the field and you just go, "What? No, that's not what it says in the text..."

... I think the Whitney [Independent Study curatorial training] program has a tendency to concentrate on how an artwork functions as a cultural object and how it circulates within the culture, which leads to institutional critiques. At the same time I think you're so concerned with these critical aspects that you project that onto every work that you see. So that by the time that I came to Hallwalls and started going to studios, I sort of projected the functionality or instrumentality of a work onto an artist. And I realized in the early months of being at Hallwalls that I couldn't really do that. For instance, Carl Ostendarp was the first studio visit I ever made as curator at Hallwalls. And Carl says, "Well, it's just a dumb painting, what do you want me to say?" So you take a Whitney program background and what do you do with having an artist saying it's just a dumb painting?

[interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994]

SWIMMING IN THE MAINSTREAM: BUFFALO'S ARTS ESTABLISHMENT

The artists who created Hallwalls in the mid-70s were well aware of the existing fine arts superstructure of Western New York: the museums, commercial dealers, and private collectors. While the new organization functioned quite consciously as an alternative to this primarily market-based system, its founders knew how necessary the support of the network was to their survival, so their relationship to it tended to be marked by collaboration more than antagonism. (Almost from the start, there were inevitably factions who questioned Hallwalls' complicity with the establishment, as other sections of this book indicate.)

The presence of the Albright-Knox's collection of late twentieth century contemporary art (a lot of it still controversial to many viewers) was inspirational to the Hallwalls founders; the financial and moral support offered by the collectors was helpful; and the enthusiastic encouragement of the critical establishment was essential. For the most part, as the following collection of comments gathered and assembled by Elizabeth Licata demonstrates, the respect was mutual.

1. MUSEUM CONNECTIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

SANDRA H. OLSEN

Castellani Art Museum, Niagara University

I wasn't really too involved with Hallwalls until some years after I became director of the old Buscaglia-Castellani Gallery in 1979, which later became the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University. We were such a small, struggling place then. One of the nice things that Armand Castellani would do is that he would make his friends life members of Hallwalls, and he made me a life member. For these life memberships we would receive some artwork that could then be donated to the museum's collections. That happened back in the days before the tax laws changed. Now, you would need to take that off your deduction. I think that's how an Ellen Carey photograph entered the collections, and that's really how I became introduced to Hallwalls.

The curator I knew well was Catherine Howe. We were always exchanging ideas and artists names; their files were very useful. I don't think people realized the extent of the Hallwalls archives, which were well-organized and more selective than in other places—always a fantastic resource for us. I brought my museum studies classes there several times. I think it's worked the other way around, too. When they wanted to set up a program with schools or something like that, they would talk to us.

They've played such an important role in this area. When I wanted to find out who the new, interesting artists were, I would always go and talk to the curators there. They were also the first ones to really focus on thematic exhibitions, and I learned a lot about doing that from them. And, of course, they were the ones to introduce video to Western New York, more than anyone else. They're artists, and they're thinking like artists; that's important. We've been lucky to have the alternative scene represented in this area, really from its inception.

What I wonder about is the whole shift from a participating artist system to a curator system. They've been more interested in curating, publishing, and documenting; it seems that people need a more authoritative structure now. The danger always is that you'll be afraid to throw things together and see what happens, really create some interesting visual relationships that let the viewer figure it all out. I think places like Hallwalls are uniquely able to create situations for audience participation—more than museums or anywhere else—which might surprise many people. It's a stimulating experience to go there because it's not being filtered through what somebody else thinks.

DOUGLAS SCHULTZ
Albright-Knox Art Gallery

I came to Buffalo from Berkeley in 1972; I was 27. It was a big change in the sense that I was moving to a city in the Northeast and the weather was a lot different, but there wasn't a collection of this caliber of post-WWII art in all of California. So it was a wonderful opportunity to be able to come to the Albright-Knox on a one-year appointment as a curatorial intern. I was right out of graduate school. I stayed on because I was continually being given new challenges and the promotions that came along with them. Within 11 years after my arrival I was appointed director.

When I first came here, I was told that the university played a major role in the cultural life of Buffalo, but I really didn't sense it. It was more the offspring of the university—the students—who seemed to be where the energy was. The perfect examples were these young people who felt that the Albright-Knox couldn't be all things to all people, and as practicing artists they wanted to experience the avant garde first hand. That, to me, was the basis for what started to happen on Essex Street. It was the '70s version of Happenings. Remember, I had been at Berkeley from 1965 to 1972. There was what was happening at the Fillmore; a lot of it related to the music scene, a lot of it related to the drug culture. There was the whole political scene. I remember the art museum at Berkeley was taken over with protest art when they bombed Cambodia. The University gave us the space and we plastered it with protest art. My education and experiences in the Bay Area allowed me to be very open to any kind of experimentation presented at Hallwalls; it was a natural progression. I remember that when I was considering coming to Buffalo, the English and Philosophy departments at UB had always had a great connection with Berkeley. I was told that Elmwood Avenue would be the closest thing to College Street. In a way, it fit.

Hallwalls also complemented the more traditional establishment role of a major museum. Because they had that kind of energy, all of us wanted to see Hallwalls thrive, and we tried to support them, if not monetarily, at least psychologically. We all tried to be a support system, but it was Linda Cathcart, who really, as I look back, was the godmother. She bonded with the artists and she was coming from New York, so she had those contacts. They were able to do so much with no money. Everybody was able to do a lot with no money then. They always sought out our advice and counsel and always appreciated any connections we could make for them. They epitomized the best of what an alternative space could be. They were young artists—that's not always been the case with alternative spaces—and they had a lot of energy. In a certain way they were naïve and that naïveté allowed them to just plow ahead and accomplish all these great things. Hallwalls—as many other alternative spaces did—ended up becoming more of an establishment in later years because of the requirements of granting agencies such as NYSCA. They followed the Kunsthalle model. It got to the point where that kind of structure and establishment took a little bit of the vitality out of it. You really didn't notice that the dynamic had changed until Longo came back and did a show for them in the '80s and it was like the old days. It was artists presenting artists; that was always one of the great strengths of Hallwalls.

I remember John Baldessari's presence. I remember the most beautiful tissue drawings pinned up on the wall by Eric Fischl. I didn't know who Laurie Anderson was when she did her performance, but I sure heard a lot about Laurie Anderson afterwards. I attended a lot of events, not every one. I'll remember that afternoon that Jennifer Bartlett read from her diary as long as I live. It was fabulous. I think that the cooperative shows between Hallwalls and the Albright gave a breath of fresh air to our programming and gave Hallwalls a certain amount of support from the establishment. I personally was not involved in them since I was working more with the permanent collection then, but I remember the discussion was always equally weighted between representatives of both organizations.

Now that I'm a director I tend to put so much energy into the well-being of this institution that I haven't really thought about what's going on with other spaces. We're all in the trenches these days. I've always looked to Hallwalls as an opportunity for me to see the new and challenging, which is a nice alternative to being a full-time administrator. I try to be as supportive as I can when I can be; I think it continues to be a well-run institution and the fact that they've been able to acquire and develop an exciting space like the Tri-Main building is a tribute to those that are involved with [the organization today]. It demonstrates that they want to continue and will continue to be a important presence in the community. They don't need a godfather or a mentor any more. Those beginning years were so important, and that really laid the groundwork. Once the reputation was built up, that allowed them to do even more challenging things. Other artists wanted to get involved because of the success record. It really snowballed. I would think by 1977, anybody dealing with contemporary art in New York knew about Hallwalls. You'd go there and a dealer would say, "What's happening up there?"

ARMAND J. CASTELLANI

Castellani Art Museum, Niagara University

Armand J. Castellani is Director Emeritus of Tops Markets, Inc. and founder, with other Western New York business associates, of the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University. His own collection of contemporary art has formed the nucleus for the museum's collections and programs.

Hallwalls was a great introduction for emerging young artists: Cindy Sherman, Eric Fischl, David Salle, Barbara Bloom, Cathy Howe, Charles Simonds, and many others. The amazing part is I think I've bought some of each. The basic reason all this happens is that Western New York is a great art center, better than most people know. You take the Albright-Knox Gallery, the Burchfield-Penney, Media Study Buffalo, the Niagara University Gallery. Especially the Albright-Knox. The little education I've gotten in art I owe to Bob Buck, Jim Wood, and Doug Schultz [former and current Albright-Knox directors]. A little story about Jim Wood: when I first got involved in art in the latter part of the 1970's I read a few books, and I asked Jim, "O.K., now where do I go?" I thought he was going to recommend some more books, but he said "Forget the books, just go and see as much art as you can to develop the feel." I found out four years later what "developing the feel" meant. Doug Schultz asked me to look at a Melissa Miller painting and I took a quick look at it, and I thought Thomas Hart Benton, even though the brushstrokes weren't there. It didn't really look like a Benton. I didn't think much more about it until a critic for the *New York Times* said that Melissa Miller's "Aesop's Fable" (which I had pur-

chased for the Albright-Knox) had the Thomas Hart Benton feel.

When I was planning to retire in the '70s—which I ended up not doing—I thought I'd get involved in art just to keep myself busy. Bill Currie asked me to join the board at Hallwalls and I did, partially in order to learn more about the art world, partially to keep from being idle. I met Cindy Sherman, Charlie Clough, and Robert Longo then. They were still active. I remember when I met Longo, he said, "Gee, I had you sized up as a crusty old man." And he was surprised; he finally saw me as a human being. He's a great guy, by the way. But Buffalo really didn't provide me with enough physical activity, so when I moved south to start up the farm in Sarasota I lost touch with the Hallwalls artists. I got to know Charlie Clough well, though, and I have kept in contact with him.

I think that Hallwalls had pretty good leadership. They're constantly growing and they're doing a good job. I saw the Barbara Bloom watermark papers suite at Hallwalls; later it won an award in the Aperto of the Venice Biennale. I bought some Cathy Howe paintings from Hallwalls; I'm sorry I didn't buy a dozen. Also the Arnold Mesches paintings. Hallwalls played a role in getting the young people out there hearing about new ideas; modern art is more about ideas than formal techniques. I can't justify the word most, but I can say that many of the artists shown at Hallwalls came close to hitting my definition of art which makes it.



Arnold Mesches retrospective at Hallwalls, Sept. 1985.

2. IN AND OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM: COLLECTING IN BUFFALO

CECILE AND STEVEN BILTEKOFF

Buffalo collectors Cecile and Steven Biltkoff have been involved in the Western New York art scene for almost 30 years. During at least half that time they've been attending Hallwalls openings, screenings, and performances; Cecile was on the board of directors for three years. Currently, the Biltkoffs' collection includes work by Hallwalls founders Charles Clough, Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, and Nancy Dwyer as well as work by Tony Oursler, Ellen Carey, Frank Moore, Barbara Ess, Christy Rupp, and many others.

STEVEN BILTEKOFF: I remember first starting to go to Hallwalls when it was on Essex Street. I think one of the first shows I went to was an Ellen Carey show. I think the pieces we lent to the [20th anniversary] show are from that time—around the mid-70s.

CECILE BILTEKOFF: I remember that we had young children and our lives were really busy. My main recollection of Hallwalls is always trying to go there and we couldn't get in. We'd get everything together on a Saturday, pack the little ones in the car and get there and—"Hellooo..."—knocking on doors, and sometimes someone would let us in and sometimes they wouldn't.

SB: I think Charlie [Clough] was around more than anybody else.

CB: They were questioning what was going into the galleries and the whole gallery system. They were saying, "Hey, there's other stuff going on that's interesting. There's other artists worth supporting and we can get feedback in other ways besides through the commercial system," which was really interesting to me. Otherwise, what you would have been seeing as collectors is late Minimalism, hard-edge, the later generations of ab-ex stuff.

SB: Right, sure. If it weren't for Hallwalls, all we would have been seeing is what was going on at the Albright-Knox, which is wonderful stuff but it was really always more mainstream, less on the cutting edge, especially back then.

CB: Because it had come through the gallery system.

SB: It had come through the system and that's what the Albright-Knox is and they've done a wonderful job with it. I think that's what so great about having both the

Albright-Knox and Hallwalls in Buffalo. In a sense, you're seeing the extremes of how art can be presented and what kind of art is presented.

CB: And the reasons for art being presented.

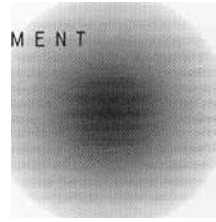
SB: I was thinking that the other great benefit of having both Hallwalls and the Albright-Knox here is that Hallwalls is not just a place to look at art, it was a place to meet artists. It's had an enormous influence not only on the way Cecile and I look at art, but the way we treat it and the way we feel about it and the way we tend to have a great deal of respect for the objects. Because we got to know artists and how immersed in their work they were and how a painting or whatever object it was became so much a part of that person. When you buy a painting or an object of any kind it's like you're buying a part of somebody and you have to treat that object with a great deal of care and respect. So much went into that. Not necessarily into that particular piece but into creating the individual that produced it. It's very personal. I think that's one of the reasons that whenever we're asked to lend anything, it has to be a really, really good reason not to lend it. We just feel an obligation to do that. We have these pieces, but they're everybody's.

CB: It's a little bit different for me. I also learned from Hallwalls in that it was the first time we'd had a chance to interact with living artists. That was a big deal, but what I learned more was the importance of the artist in society and how crucial that voice is. I began to appreciate more what Hallwalls was doing because they were giving those artists a place to have that voice. Whether or not we bought it. I had never truly understood that role before. Without artists you would not have that conscience. That's had a huge impact on what I do in my own life, where I put my energies.

CB: ... We've only talked about the visual arts, but I have to tell you that one of the profoundest effects Hallwalls has had on me is with performance art. Hallwalls introduced us to performance art—

SB: —Absolutely.

CB: —and I just developed a strong connection to it. ...



It's probably not popular to say right now, but I think that what performance art does is so vital. I think people who put it down are over-generalizing about it.

SB: I remember the performance program most, seeing Holly Hughes, Pat Oleszko, Reno, Carmelita Tropicana, Robert Wilson, Rachel Rosenthal, Ethyl Eichelberger, Tim Miller ...

CB: Again, it's not who you see but it's just the fact that it made me so much more open to see things and to hear things.

SB: That's the thing about Hallwalls.

CB: The fact that they had performance art, the fact that they had Fiction Diction. I classify almost everything now as art; I'm open about what's art, what I respect about it, what is an art form. ... That's what Hallwalls did. I think it's important to have as many art forms as possible. If funding is a problem in the current political climate, I see that as a challenge for Hallwalls, because they've always been able to buck those kinds of things. I would hope that they will find a way to keep all these forms alive. It's their job to give those forms and those artists a place.

FERN LEVIN

Fern and Joel Levin have been active as collectors and as participants/volunteers for Buffalo arts organizations since the '70s. In addition to a sizable print collection, they have collected works by the Hallwalls founders and early exhibiting artists.

The very first piece of art we purchased was a Richard Anuszkiewicz serigraph in '67 or '68. Sears Roebuck had Vincent Price select art for a traveling collection which was for sale. It cost a month's rent.

We had never talked about becoming collectors, other than knowing that people enhanced their lives and surroundings by having art on the walls. In about three to four years we got together what we thought was a pretty interesting collec-

tion of prints. It was and is a wonderful hobby, and we still love living with what we've collected. One of the best parts of becoming a collector was meeting artists and gallery people. We gave and went to many parties for artists. Through the years, we expanded into other areas; we don't buy as much, and we're more selective now.

I really don't remember meeting Robert Longo or Cindy Sherman from Hallwalls—although I do remember meeting Charlie Clough, who's still a good friend. We used to go to the openings and then I was asked to be on the board and became active doing fundraising. I had always been interested in the arts and I figured Hallwalls was a terrific place to go see new art. So much happened there.

NINA FREUDENHEIM
Nina Freudenheim Gallery

From the time the Nina Freudenheim Gallery opened, it was one of the few—occasionally the only—commercial venues in Buffalo for contemporary art. The artists shown at Nina Freudenheim over the last 20 years include Hallwalls founder Charles Clough, as well as artists Tom Butter, Ellen Carey, Sam Gilliam, Giles Lyon, Arnold Mesches, John Pfahl, Christy Rupp, Peter Stephens, and many others.

I've been trying to remember what, if any, connection there was back in 1975 when I opened my art gallery, with the opening of Hallwalls that same year. Nothing specific comes to mind.

What I remember when I so excitedly pursued my venture into the commercial art world was, despite all the negative comments, a feeling of hope. You had the feeling that you could do something. If you worked hard enough, long enough, you could achieve. Buffalo was full of promise for me then, and, evidently, for others as well. You could think creatively and feel that you might be able to realize what was making up your dreams. It was O.K. to take chances; you didn't feel you could lose. There was an air of optimism.

I guess the artists at Hallwalls felt the same way. We both gained a great deal and I will always be grateful. I doubt that the same could be achieved today. It's a very different time.

Statement written for this publication, 1995.



Nina Freudenheim, publicity photo from Hallwalls' "Collectors Series," a 1990 symposium on art collecting, featuring talks by Freudenheim, Robert T. Buck, Marvin Heiferman, Scott Rucker, and Herbert & Dorothy Vogel. Photo: Ken Pelka

WAYS IN

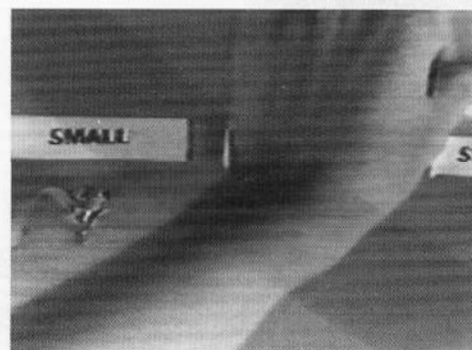
GAY ART, GAY ARTISTS, GAY AUDIENCES

RONALD EHMKE

Excerpt from program notes for
"Ways in Being Gay," November 1990

There's a by-now tired old joke around Hallwalls, born some time around the 1988 "Ways in Being Gay" festival: "When are you going to do 'Ways in Being Straight?'" somebody will ask. And the answer is usually: Every day, every week, every month except November (in even-numbered years). As if to imply that "gay art" fits neatly into the ghetto of a biannual festival and everything else is "straight art." But that's not at all accurate: we present work by gay artists throughout the year, some of it explicitly about sexuality, lots of it not. (Just this weekend I found myself embroiled in a lively, unresolvable argument about whether art which doesn't address gay issues can legitimately be considered "gay" or not.) The very notion that art comes with gender preference attached is ludicrous.

So why a festival? Because there is strength in numbers, both on stage and in the audience. ... We live in a city whose gay "community" is still—in the face of AIDS, hate crimes, censored artists, harassment and confiscation at the border, and homophobic politicians—largely apolitical and still centered on a half-dozen bars. Things may be changing, however slowly: Buffalo's first-ever lesbian & gay town meeting featured representatives from over 30 groups, from book-of-the-month clubs to AIDS service organizations. The art world can and must be a part of the politicization of the city. It's not just a matter of presenting the umpteenth screening of "Desert Hearts," though: an art festival can provide voices from outside the complacency of the familiar; it can challenge (gay as well as straight) people's thinking; it can disturb them, delight them, move them to action.



Julie Zando, video still from "How Big is Big?"
Hallwalls postcard, 1985.

LIZ LAPOVSKY KENNEDY

Buffalo, NY

iPhone interview with Ronald Ehmke, 1995

I haven't confirmed this with anyone else, but I remember that sometime in the late '70s, a group of us, including [SUNY Buffalo faculty members] Isabel Marcus, Ellen Dubois, and I, were tired of living in Buffalo without any avant-garde arts. There was nothing [at Hallwalls or anywhere else in town] reverberating with any of the critiques of race, class and gender that were going on in the rest of the art world or the world at large, so we strategized a kind of coup to move Hallwalls in that direction. It was feminist work we particularly wanted to see; I don't think we ever imagined there would be anything like a gay/lesbian festival.

Ellen, I think, went to one of their board meetings, and then called us to say our "coup" wasn't even necessary; everybody on the board was completely agreeable to the idea. It was over-strategized for no reason!

Marcus and Dubois eventually served on Hallwalls' board; Kennedy appeared on advisory committees for several gay festivals, and in 1990 read excerpts from the manuscripts which became her award-winning history of Buffalo's lesbian community, Boots of Leather, Silppers of Gold, with co-author Madeline Davis.

ROGER DENSON

[Interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994]

What was really important [about Hallwalls' programming in the late '70s and early '80s, when Denson was one of the only out gay people at the center of the organization] was the constant, nomadic shift from painting to sculpture to performance to film to video. There was no unity, no totality; I was seeing the diversity and the pluralism [of the art world at large]. Later, I think, [film/performance curator] Steve Gallagher introduced a gay thematic; he was bringing in people like John Kelly [in 1984, part of "The Pyramid Cocktail Lounge in Buffalo"], and [exhibitions curators] Cathy Howe and Robin Dodds brought in feminist stuff. Charles Wright expanded on that; each curator kept apace. We were always in touch with the moment nationally, even internationally.

STEVE GALLAGHER

Excerpt from program notes for "The Other Sex," June 1988

Several years ago [1985] I organized a gay and lesbian film festival for Hallwalls. This festival, of mostly experimental shorts, took place at the Trafamadore Cafe and was very well attended—although the consensus seemed to be that few people actually enjoyed, understood, or appreciated the films screened.

My assumption, as a gay male, that gays and lesbians would be more receptive to "experimental" films—because of the "alternative" nature of our sexual practices—was unfounded. There is no real, demonstrable difference between most gays and lesbians and what is commonly called the status quo (of middle-class heterosexuals)—no difference, that is, except in proclaimed sexual preference.

Although gays and lesbians have banded together (at least since the storming of Stonewall) to advocate for the right to engage in consensual sex with whomever they choose and to protest against discrimination, they do not otherwise necessarily share much—as their polarized sexual orientation might imply. Nor are they so different from each other, or from anyone else.

While it is still crucially important to forge a gay and lesbian alliance which is politically active in safeguarding our rights, it is the intention of the "Other Sex" festival to begin to question our complicity with the ghettoization of our sexuality as an unyielding,

bounded, type. All gays, and all lesbians, are not alike. There is as much diversity within gay and lesbian "communities" as within any compatible demographic survey of heterosexual "communities." We are nobody's but our own lovers' significant "other."

The majority of films included in this festival do not, in fact, represent an easily categorized sexuality; yet I have called it a gay and lesbian film festival to reach a specific audience. The inclusion of bisexual, transsexual, homosexual, lesbian and other films representing more ambivalent preferences, purposefully contradict (or problematize) assumptions about what gay, lesbian, or hetero sexuality is. "The Other Sex" offers a multi-faceted portrait of sexuality as something more complex—more fluid—than is generally represented: it questions if in fact there is one norm against which an other can be pitted.

This festival, of mostly narrative feature films by independent producers, is offered as a celebration of alternative sexualities and a necessary corrective to our own complicity with the narrow language that attempts to contain us.

"The Other Sex" provided early exposure to the work of then-emerging directors Pedro Almodovar, Terence Davies, Gregg Araki, Gus van Sant, and Su Friedrich, as well as the first Buffalo screenings of three films from 1986 which signaled the growing success of independent gay-themed features: "Desert Hearts," "Parting Glances," and "My Beautiful Laundrette."

RONALD EHMKE

Excerpt from program notes for "Ways in Being Gay," November 1988

The motivation for an entire series of performances by gay people came, first, from the runaway success of last year's evening of work by Holly Hughes and other women associated with the East Village theater collective WOW Cafe. The self-styled "political incorrectness" of performers like Carmelita Tropicana offered a refreshing alternative to the age-old dilemma of how to make art which is both entertaining and politically engaging. Here was work which took homosexuality for granted, as another element in the fabric of everyday life, just as most movies and virtually all television series consider the heterosexuality of characters a given. WOW plays seldom make an issue of "coming out," as earlier gay theater often did—because their heroines (and villains) are *already out* in the world. Which leaves room for a whole new range of experience for gay artists to explore: real and invented memoirs, racism, ethnicity, political empowerment, ghettoization, alcoholism, the beginnings, middles, and ends of relationships. Some little events, some big ones—matters of life and death in the age of AIDS. This matter-of-factness seems to me to constitute a revolution of sorts; it points the way toward a new wave of gay-themed work.

... Many of the participants in "Ways In" hijack traditional art forms (stand-up comedy, pulp thrillers, sci-fi movies, pop songs, and detective novels, for example) and send them in new directions, with new meanings, new subjects. This is the terrain of camp, irony, artifice, juxtaposition: the territory of post-modernism.

... There is no underlying critical premise informing "Ways In," no hidden theoretical agenda. Our only curatorial aim is to present a sampler of interesting new work in a variety of media, with particular attention to live appearances by artists. On the other hand, while we've tried to represent a number of widely different "ways in being gay," the series is not meant to be a comprehensive survey. This is, to an extent, a function of the way it has been assembled, relying as we have on word of mouth in selecting many of the participants. (Special thanks are due Holly Hughes, Larry Brose, Robert Giard, Ellie Covan, John Greyson, Gregory Kolovakos, and Patrick Moore for their invaluable assistance providing suggestions and contacts.) In any case, during the three weeks of the series, you will have a chance to see and hear work by artists from Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Toronto, Pittsburgh, Boston, and Rochester, as well as New York City and Buffalo. Our search for emerging artists has meant that many of the names on the schedule may be unfamiliar to audiences today, but the work they are doing is well worth a look.

The first "Ways in" festival included performances by Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, Alice B. Theatre, Jaffe Cohen, and Reno; readings by Eileen Myles, Sarah Schulman, C. Carr, Dennis Cooper, Bruce Benderson, the Other Countries collective; and the first Buffalo appearance by representatives of New York's then-new ACT UP chapter.

TOM DOONEY

Excerpt from "Sapphic Supervixen Does Buffalo: The Refined Miss Holly Hughes" in *Arts in Buffalo*, November 2, 1988

While in Buffalo, Hughes has tentative plans to videotape a spoof of the current Sigourney Weaver hit Flick. The Hughes version will be called "Garfields in the Midst" and will tell the story of an adventurous woman who befriends a band of stuffed cats.

The tape was never made, but Dooney's designation of Hughes as a "Sapphic Supervixen" was immediately adopted by writers across the nation.

HIGHWAYS

PERFORMANCE SPACE

1651 18th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404 • Co-directors Tim Miller & Linda Faye Barakham • 714/453-1755, 453-2711

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of Hallwalls Lesbian and Gay Festival "Ways in Being Gay". I participated as a performer in the first festival in 1988 and I was extremely impressed with the scope and vision that went into the organization of this event. As an organizer of Lesbian and Gay cultural events myself, I can say that "Ways in Being Gay" was a model for how an arts organization can address our community's cultural concerns. There have been healthy new projects and friendships that came out of the community of artists that Hallwalls brought together for the first festival.

I strongly urge you to support Hallwalls for "Ways in Being Gay II".

Regards,

Tim Miller

Tim Miller
Artistic Co-Director
Highways Performance Space
1651 18th Street
Santa Monica, CA 90404

"Ways in Being Gay"
gallery exhibition,
1988.



CATHERINE HOWE

Excerpt from program notes for "Ways in Being Gay," November 1988

This group show features paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media works by 12 artists whose work reflects issues of immediate concern to gay men today. It is not intended as a survey of the range of work made by or pertinent to gay men, nor does it focus on one central issue. It does, however, propose certain recurrent themes such as gender identification, social stigma and stereotyping, alternative aesthetics, eroticism, & morality. All of the artists are producing work which somehow touches on their lives and history as gay men within the framework of more universal themes.

The exhibition contained work by Nayland Blake, Edward Gnirke, Craig R.L. Keller, Cary Leibowitz, Rudy Lemcke, John Lindell, and Hunter Reynolds, among others.

CHARLES WRIGHT

[Interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994]

EL: You curated a "Ways in Being Gay" exhibition in 1990, which was difficult for you

CW: This is where my whole skepticism about identity politics comes in. The easy thing to do is to find every gay artist that does work particularly relevant to their gayness and put it in a room: that constitutes a ghetto. That's where I came from. I don't really like the idea of restraining people by their subjectivities, and only that one aspect of their subjectivities. The only way you get a gay artist is through their subject matter. I mean, to say that Jasper Johns is a gay artist doesn't [make his work gay].... I could only think of subject matter, and to do that to artists or to have them do it to themselves was some-

thing I wasn't interested in. As a gay man, I was not interested in producing that.

I thought, well, what about doing something that's more metaphorically related to how we deal with the body? At the time there had been a resurgence of work related to the body. I wanted to something more dangerous. I also thought you could do a lot of bizarre things even in the midst of controversy. There's a lot of deceptively raw stuff in that show [*Viral Infection: The Body and Its Discontents*]*—genitalia, porno images—but they were sort of embedded in the work.*

Viral Infection included work by Matthew Barney, Elizabeth Berdann, Brian Goldfarb, Simon Leung, Belinda Rascka, Aura Rosenberg, Laura Stein, TODT & others.

MIDI ONODERA

Excerpt from program notes for "What is a Lesbian Work?," part of "Ways in Being Gay," November 1990

The debate over what is and is not a "lesbian" film or video continues to be a source of contention at most lesbian and gay film and video festivals. Some argue that works which focus on issues of lesbian sexuality, eroticism, and self-identity are the only works which should carry the lesbian banner. Others believe that as long as the work is produced by a "card-carrying lesbian," it can be deemed appropriate.

As someone who has also heard the shockingly similar debates erupting in the "visible minority" communities (this is / is not an Asian-Canadian story, etc.), I would like to toss out this feverish need to label and restrict the content of work within the confines of this program. Some viewers may find that a few of the selections do not fit into a distinct "lesbian" category. There are works by bisexual women and by both "straight" and gay men which have been included in the program. The content of work ranges from the explicit sexual explorations of a female-to-male transsexual to issues surrounding violence against women, AIDS activism, and lesbian porn.

As a filmmaker, I have found it necessary to continu-

ally challenge rigid definitions of "lesbian work" by expanding and exploring various avenues of content and form. Although works by "straight" men or even "straight" women rarely give a lesbian audience an inside view into our lives, they do inform us of how we are perceived and, in some cases, stereotyped in media. This in turn affects our perceptions of identity in a public light. By contrast, lesbian-produced work can inform us of a specific point of view and experience, perhaps one we can directly relate to. Simply being a lesbian does not dictate content, it informs it.

The selection of the lesbian component for the "Ways in Being Gay" festival was developed from a special call to contributors of lesbian culture in film, video and print media. Fourteen women were asked to submit titles of film and video work which they found in some way to be exciting, innovative, perhaps erotic, perhaps "politically correct" or "incorrect" contributions to lesbian film and video culture. Seven women responded with a variety of titles. ... Although it was impossible to program all of the suggestions, it is hoped that other festival programmers and interested viewers will use the participants' recommendations as a resource for some powerful works.

"What is a Lesbian Work?" included screenings of films and tapes by Aarin Burch, G. B. Jones, Pratibha Parmar, Gwendolyn, Ana Maria Simo, Jennifer Montgomery, and many others.

LIZ KOTZ

Excerpt from program notes for "Lines of Flight: (mostly) west coast video," part of "Ways in Being Gay," November 1990

left open. I wanted this to be a place to include more enigmatic and more difficult works which might not find a home in other gay programs—while also embracing humor, entertainment, and a range of lesbian and gay popular cultures.

The show is loosely centered around my own location in San Francisco, but it spins off from there. Without any clear intention or plan, half the tapes turned out to be from people born outside the United States; over half are by women. At times, the border between what is straight or gay is in question. Other cultural borders—between black and white, between pop and art, pornography and domesticity, camp and punk, separatism and S&M—also seem to be in question. Among the themes and devices that seem to occur or reoccur: uncertain relationships, celebrity impersonation, borrowed materials, melodrama, pop cultural references, music as structure, re-enactment, cross-gender and cross-race drag, combining genres. Style seems central. To quote the L.A.-based writer Matias Viegner, in his "Revolt Style: Gay Fanzines, Enlightened Audiences and Censorship" in *Framework*: "The work that these kinds of publications promote is a kind of festive combat. It is the use of style to decenter a totalizing cultural hegemony. Style in this formulation involves a re-territorialization, a vocabulary stolen from the masters..."

"Lines of Flight" included tapes by Leslie Singer, Azian Nurudin, Cecelia Dougherty, Jane Cottis, and many others.

In planning this program, I wanted to step away from the gay mainstream and instead focus on differently-located lesbian and gay expressions—whether from younger gay people, ethnic communities, cultural exiles, punk sensibilities, or some combination thereof.

The definition of what makes a "gay" tape is deliberately



Ethyl Eichelberger (L) & Hapi Phace (R) in performance, 1985

EDMUND CARDONI

Excerpt from program notes for
"Ways in Being Gay," November 1990

A lot has happened in the two years since the overwhelming artistic and popular success of the first "Ways In" festival encouraged us to make it a biannual event. For one thing, to state the fact as brutally as it deserves, a lot of gay artists have died since then. At no time since a celebrated generation of young poets fell in the fields and trenches of the First World War have so many talented and courageous young artists died in the prime of their creative lives. Writer Gregory Kolovakos, for example, whose suggestions and contacts were so helpful in planning the last "Ways In" festival, died of AIDS last April at the age of 38. Ethyl Eichelberger, whom we were hoping to invite as a featured attraction of this year's festival, committed suicide just a few weeks ago, in despair over his own deteriorating health and the inconsolable loss of so many of his closest associates.

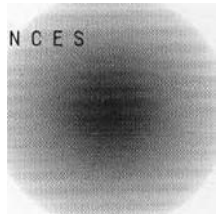
Other friends of Hallwalls and "Ways In" have come under attack by infectious agents within the body politic. Most notably, Holly Hughes and Tim Miller—as even readers of *People* and *Newsweek* know by now—were denied NEA solo performance grants that had been awarded to them by a duly constituted panel, on the basis (the appointed Minister of Decency said) of "political realities," namely that their work might be judged "obscene" by the ideologically driven and Constitutionally shaky standards imposed on the NEA by the likes of Jesse Helms and his compromising colleagues.

... So why in 1990, with "homoeroticism" supposedly outlawed in federally funded art and past "Ways In" artists blacklisted at the NEA, are we "risking" another [gay-themed] festival? ... As an alternative space—i.e., a space for the expression and investigation of alternatives through art—Hallwalls' mandate is to foster free artistic

inquiry into the issues of the day. And to provide a place where viewers who choose to may have free access to the products of those artistic inquiries. It's as simple as that. To be in good faith with what we are, we can't risk not doing so.

... One final point I'd like to make is that this festival of work *by* gay men and lesbians is not exclusively *for* gay men and lesbians. We non-gay people are welcome too. The intolerance we've been seeing in this country lately is the direct result of ignorance, for we are a nation of sexuality-illiterates. Most of us behold the multiplicity of sexual being and sexual choices with the same anxiety and incomprehension with which actual illiterates confront a world of printed words. But their sexuality poses no threat to us; it's our intolerance which threatens them. And right now, that threat is dangerously real. We hope "Ways In" will do for the sexuality-illiterate what reading instruction does for actual illiterates: teach us that those unfamiliar shapes are nothing to be afraid of. They're just trying to tell us something.

In addition to "Viral Infection," "What is a Lesbian Work?," and "Lines of Flight," the 1990 festival included solo exhibitions by John Tower and Michael Stolbach; a residency by video artists Brenda and Glennda (discussed in detail in the "Close Encounters" section of this book); films by Julie Zando, Mark Huestis, Rosa Von Praunheim, Cathy Cook, Bruce LaBruce, Lawrence Brose, and Jack Waters & Carl Michael George; live appearances by Assoto Saint, Susie Bright, James Adlesic, Kate Bornstein, David Wojnarowicz & Ben Neill, Minnie Bruce Pratt, the Washington Sisters, Al Lirog, Tom Spanbauer, Essex Hemphill, Tom Waugh, Sheila Gostick, John Patterson, Jürgen Brüning, Beverly Sanford, Richard Fung, Lawrence Steger, David Butler, Terry Galloway, and the High Risk Group; plus a World AIDS Day screening of activist tapes in a local laundromat.



THE JOHN OTTO SHOW
WGR Radio, November 1, 1990

Caller 1: John, this has gotta be a joke here, with these guys puttin' on this performance here for the month of November. As you recall, way in the past, Hizzoner the Mayor [James Griffin] knocked down those, uh, so-called homosexual neon lights that were paraded here a few years back [referring to "Green Lightning," a public art project to which the mayor vehemently objected] ...

Otto: I think you may have it confused; it was simply said to be a representation of male genitalia, with no homosexual overtones—

Caller 1: —Right. You know how Hizzoner the Mayor doesn't go for that here, and I think these gentlemen are taking our other name, "The Queen City," literally—

Otto: —Yes, I've heard some of his terminology, a terminology which I don't adopt or use, but yes, I know, the Mayor's position is rather clear. And yet he hasn't objected—

Caller 1: —No, he hasn't said a word about this yet. But the bottom line is, I think, if they need any help, whatever, to clean this up around here and not even to get this goin', I think Curtis Sliwa and his gang of marauders from New York will come in here and give anyone a hand... I can't see that [gay art] here at all! It's totally degrading. All you guys [Cardoni and Ehmke, guests in the studio] sit there and say that homosexuality is a perversion, a provision, of your rights. It's not right! There isn't a law in the United States, in any state, that says that homosexuality is right for the individual. It's not right! It's not in the books; never was, never will be.

Caller 2: Are we talking about Buffalo? Maybe they're pulling out all the stops. [...] They're making themselves so visible, until it becomes so commonplace, like everything else on TV; you're watching somebody get cut up into little pieces and it doesn't mean a thing. And I think this is exactly what's happening! Because they have been infiltrating everywhere, and it's just getting ... You know, maybe I'm not intellectual or sophisticated enough to appreciate this, their lifestyle or their sexuality. And it's always sexuality, and it's always art, and it's always art of the genitalia, and it's always "art" no matter what they do. I think they got in through the back door because of this so-called "art," which to me is smut! [...] I've been curious over the years, as far as gays were concerned, and I did look into different things, and I did look at movies, trying to look into things on my own...

The Buffalo News/Friday, November 2, 1990

BRIEFLY

City Hall steps are scene of gay rights 'kiss-in'

Buffalo's nickname as the "Queen City" got a different meaning today during a gay pride rally and kiss-in on the steps of City Hall.

About a dozen people awaited the arrival two people, who identified themselves as Brenda and Glenda, for what was billed as a "militant display of lesbian and gay affection" over the noon hour.

After about a 20-minute delay, Glenda, wearing his faux leopard fur coat, long black gloves and platinum wig, strolled up the steps.

Brenda followed in a tight blue miniskirt, black stockings and metallic gold and black jacket.

The two New York City residents were here for the "Ways in Being Gay" cultural exhibit at the Hallwalls art gallery.

BILL SMARTT / MARK MISROK
San Francisco, CA

ple, or that there wasn't any type of cohesiveness in the "performance art" scene in San Francisco at the time or what, but we were blown away with the encouragement that we received at Hallwalls.

It all started with Paul Dickinson, who somehow heard about our "sound collage cassette stuff" and contacted us about being on a compilation tape that he was assembling for Hallwalls called "Put Down Your Pencil" (1990). Of course, we sent him all that we had, and he called back and we couldn't believe how friendly, accessible and interested he was in us and the stuff that we had created. In speaking with him, I mentioned that a lot of the audio samples/passages that we used were from videotapes that we had shot [of gay teenagers] in Tennessee. We sent a videotape of some of our work and eventually spoke with Ron Ehmke (Performance Curator) who spoke of the upcoming 1990 "Ways in Being Gay" Festival. He connected us with people in surrounding cities who might have a space for us to perform and show our stuff, and with his encouragement, we booked a tour of five cities!

Once we got to Buffalo, things really seemed to click for us. Chris Hill (Video Curator) was amazingly helpful, giving us loads of places to send our work, encouraging us to edit the tapes there if we wanted. With the kind help and assistance of Andrew Deutsch, we churned out two shorter, edited versions of our videos that went on to be shown in festivals all over the country. There was something very attractive about an arts center in a smaller city—allowing it to be a more friendly, less intimidating environment for artists to thrive. Isn't that the whole point?

The night that we performed we were part of a program on Lesbian & Gay Youth. Members of GLYB (Gay & Lesbian Youth of Buffalo, subsequently renamed Gay & Lesbian Youth Services of Western New York) were in attendance; they spoke about the positive influence the group had had on their lives and showed some videos. What made this night particularly explosive was the attendance of the Rev. Darren Drzymala (a Buffalo-based minister known locally for small-scale demonstrations at gay bars and women's clinics). He had been protesting the entire "Ways In" festival, and for some reason, he felt like his presence was required at this event in particular (corruption of youth, etc...). I was actually thrilled that he was going to be there, because I did an excerpt of a performance based on one of the characters that didn't make it into the video "Class of '86." His name was Jeff and although his intense hatred of queers is obvious ("I think if you're queer, you ought to be shot in the head..."), what becomes clear is the hopelessly tangled logic that informs his thoughts. As with most fear-based bias, he really found himself running up against a brick wall when trying to state his case. It was a rare opportunity to have Rev. Drzymala and his coterie as part of an audience for a straightforward performance taken word for word from the ranting of a young queer-hater. There was a rousing discussion after all of the work was presented, and guess who was one of the first people to speak up? Of course, the Reverend. What became the most powerful part of the night was the response from the teens from GLYB, standing up and facing this man and his followers with courage, fire and a sense of solidarity that might not have otherwise taken voice if the group had not been founded, and events like "Ways In Being Gay" produced.

DAVID ROCHE
Toronto, Ontario

Ron Ehmke, getting my name from Toronto performance and video artist (and now feature filmmaker) John Greyson, invited me to contribute a performance to the 1988 "Ways In" festival, held just after Halloween of that year, practically on the eve of George Bush's ascendancy. I was billeted in the vacant flat of then-film-curator Jürgen Brüning, and had a great time getting acquainted with the gallery's nooks, crannies, and staff. I came back for two more such fests at two-year intervals, but everyone was so friendly in '88 that I was soon coming south with much greater frequency. This first year I made friends with the Funny Gay Males [Jaffe Cohen and Danny McWilliams], a hit in the fest's "Fruit & Fiber" comedy night.

The 1990 Festival featured a bit of activism: the kiss-in at City Hall. In my view Hallwalls should do this every time I visit: it's a great way to meet folks by daylight, and the justifiable osculation, whether performed dutifully or with a certain relish, makes furthering your acquaintance so much easier.

In 1992 I read an essay to music, marking the death of certain friends and philosophizing on what AIDS had done to us. The film curator by now was René Broussard, who contributed an early Russ Meyer effort. I invited René to successive Toronto Film Festivals, where he has lately made such a splash with festival officials that they have granted him a free pass.

Though I have doubtless been good to Hallwalls, they and by extension their larger artistic community (reaching as far as New York and farther) have been very, very good to me. The goodwill, professional contacts, and high spirits occasioned by each of my visits keep Hallwalls bright in my memory and ever in my consciousness. May they live long and prosper—or should I say rather, increase their existing level of government funding a hundredfold.

RONALD EHMKE

Excerpt from program notes for
"Ways in Being Gay," November 1992

... "You people are out of your minds," a former staff member told us recently, as if we weren't already aware of the absurdity of planning a month-long, city-wide lesbian & gay arts festival in this climate of rising homophobia & declining funding. ... This year, working with less than half the '90 budget, we have come up with twice as many events, by working closely with other cultural institutions & with organizations within the gay community of Buffalo. Such a strategy is perhaps the only way to survive the twin threats of economic recession & anti-gay backlash. Moreover, this dense calendar ought to lay to rest the myth that "nothing ever happens in Buffalo," that the gay community here is invisible & inactive. (At least half the programming here—political meetings, AIDS education talks, etc.—would have taken place with or without "Ways In.") This explosion of community-based activity reflects the increasing politicization of queers in Buffalo & around the country, and, as the unprecedented number of local artists & speakers attests, a simultaneous awakening of creative energy. Finally, this November deluge is full of opportunities—ways in—for you, however you choose to identify yourself (straight, bisexual, gay, lesbian, asexual, artist, activist, bar-hopper, or couch potato), to join forces with others to survive these terrible & wonderful times.

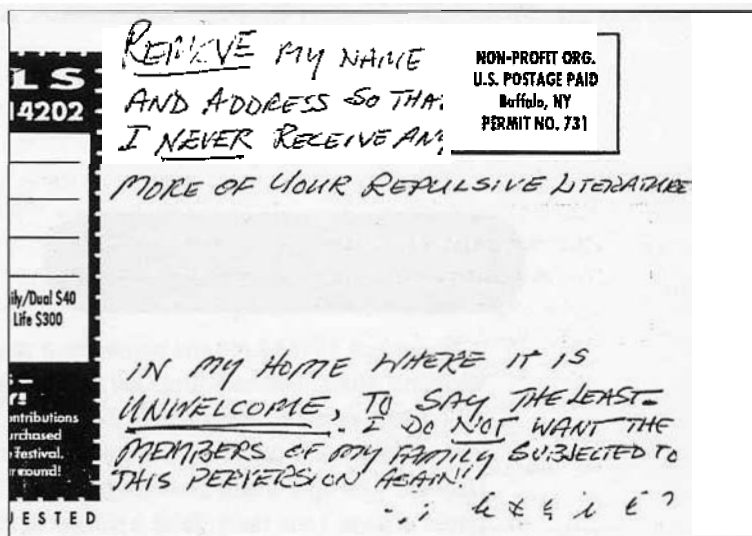
The 1992 festival's 60 exhibitions, films, videotapes, plays, performances, parties, readings, lectures, TV broadcasts, computer installations, & community activities at 14 sites throughout Buffalo included "Object Choice," a gallery show guest-curated by Ken Gonzales Day & Andrew Perchuk with work by Larry Clark, Jeanne Dunning, Marlene McCarty, Donald Moffett, & others; installations by Gay & Lesbian Youth of Buffalo and Robert Clark; a hypertext program by Michael Nash of ACT UP/Denver; personal appearances by Dr. Neal Rzepkowski, Katie Miller, Bonita Z, David MacLean, John Kelly, Leslie Feinberg, Chevon Davis, Connie Fife, Joe Dale Tate Nevaquaya, Arjay Baker, Steve Griffith, the Ladies of the Lake, and Vern Bodkin; screenings by Sadie Benning, Barbara Hammer, Ed Clark & Mei Netzhammer, Tom Kalin, and Meg Knowles; a Jack Smith memorial retrospective featuring rare materials donated by Tony Conrad; a day-long graduate symposium at SUNY Buffalo; a gay pagan "faerie circle;" the first extended run of an outside group's theatrical production (by Buffalo United Artists); and live participation in "We Interrupt This Program," a nationwide television broadcast for World AIDS Day.

WI : MD 2: 16
November 6, 1992

Hallwalls
700 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Sirs,
Please do not send "Hallwalls" magazine to our address. We are not interested in it.

No homosodamies found on that address.



MARGARET SMITH

[Phone interview with Ronald Ehmke, 1995]

There was definitely an elevated level of expectation when I came into organize the 1994 "Ways In." It wasn't as if I was establishing a tradition or a ritual; it was already in place. I felt like I was the keeper of the flame.

"Dyke TV" came to Buffalo as a direct result of the '94 festival; the national show has aired here each week ever since, and a group of local women are taping new material for their own productions. I hope each subsequent festival establishes a continuum of activity like that. It's a time for people to focus their creativity in a supportive environment; because of that it produces more tangible results. Everyone's together in the same place at the same time—people know what each other are doing, and they help out, they join in.

The 1994 "Ways In" included performances by Holly Hughes, Eileen Myles, and Ron Ehmke; three productions by Buffalo United Artists and the debut production of Hag Theatre; readings by Dorothy Allison, Elizabeth Kennedy, A. M. Allcott, Jimmie Gilliam, Alexis Deveau, Ross Hewitt, members of GLYS, Robert MacVittie, and Wendy Kramer; exhibitions by Andy Fabo & Michael Balser, Richard Roeller, and Carol Speser; the group show "Amendments," with works by Dyke Action Machine!, Gay Chan, Joy Episalla, and Ricardo Zuleta, among others; screenings by Ghen Dennis and Alan Bérubé; the world premiere of a video version of Buffalo's annual "Dykes Do Drag" production; and co-sponsorship of concerts by comic Lea Delaria, country singer Freddy Burch, and the Dyketones.

LEAH ZICARI

Buffalo, NY

I was just starting out my career as a gay-identified singer [in the mid-'80s], performing at Women's Music Festivals and Gay Pride rallies and marches. There were a lot of gay/lesbian events happening in other parts of the country, but not in Buffalo. Sure, we'd always had our quiet little concerts and gatherings, but that was the extent of it. When queers started getting loud, Hallwalls was right there, presenting its first "Ways In Being Gay" festival and bringing it to the public at large. I see Hallwalls as a pioneer in mainstreaming queer culture locally.

[After performing short sets at each of the first two festivals], I gave two full concerts, both sell-outs, in the third. I was also involved that year in Buffalo's first gay theater performance, a production of Tom Wilson-Weinberg's "10 Percent Revue," produced by Buffalo United Artists, a local theater company. This was BUA's testing of the waters to gauge Buffalo's response to gay theater. The success "Ten Percent" had at Hallwalls gave BUA its answer; they've since included at least one gay production each year as part of their regular theater season.

The gay community in Buffalo isn't very out because the city is so homophobic. It was Hallwalls who provided the first large-scale venue for queer culture in Buffalo. I think if it hadn't been for Hallwalls, we'd still be singing in church basements.

PART FOUR ALTERNATIVE HISTORIES (Making Waves)

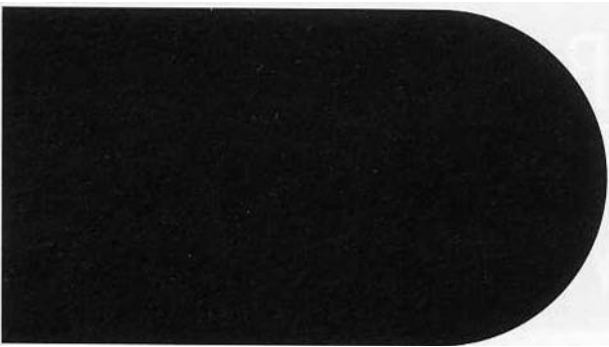
I WEAR THE WALL

Exhibit by
Charles Clough
at Hallwalls
30 Essex, Buffalo
3-14 August, 1976

Charles Clough, "I Wear the Wall," 1976.

"To create a mythology outside the whole system of mythologies:
that was always happening..."

-Michael Zwack, interview with Elizabeth Licata, 1994



ALTERNATIVE SPACE

ARLENE RAVEN

Space," the three-dimensional arena in which material objects are located and events occur, ordinarily refers to physical place. I have been asked to write about my experiences with "alternative spaces." I take that to mean not only the ventures I created with the people and in the locales in which I have worked over the past quarter-century, but also, most importantly, the nature and breadth of alternative space itself.

Alternative space is ultimately the symbolic site of the common good in a better world. It is both futuristic and idealistic, yet it can equally become present and actualized. I have pictured the dimensions of Hallwalls mostly through reading over the past twenty years. I see, nevertheless, that it is a physical space that lives in this spiritual sphere.

"Place" can be inscribed as any location. Ordinary surroundings and careful placement alike, though, are never merely neutral atmosphere or disengaged background. Place affects human health, intelligence, behavior, and even our most elemental senses of self. Where we live deeply affects who we are and will be. Place is external environment, but also, and interchangeably, internal and personal, enmeshed in a process of continuous universal change that is synchronistic and evolutionary.

Change that can ignite in a purposeful place is ideally a transformation on an institutional level. Because institutions configure the practices, relationships, and organizations in any society, effective alternatives encompass structures and systems in their scope.

The Museum of Modern Art and the National Endowment for the Arts can be called institutions because they provide patterns for people living and working together in the arts. Traditional social constructions, including art institutions, have not always allowed for the support of all artists. At their best, they have enhanced the few and left out the majority. Yet no creative individual can fully occupy his or her three dimensions without an affirmative polity of people and physical frames. What's the alternative?

Making MOMA more encompassing or the NEA less censoring will not suffice to realize the most ambitious and hopeful definitions of the alternative. To address and solve social and metaphysical problems, to lead more meaningful, productive lives, better institutions are indispensable. Organizations, but, even more so, the principles and mechanisms of the institutions called art, art history, criticism, museums, galleries, and funding partners are the true agents and objectives of transformation.

The United States began as "alternative space." American creativity, on the other hand, remains tied to an old notion of rugged individualism that contains an anti-institutional fantasy about artists' lives and work. The language of art history and criticism focuses on individual achievement and self-actualization. Public or private commitments to communities and their constituents seem secondary or non-existent. Curators and historians as well as artists often fail to understand the abiding existence of institutions. Thus their roles in shaping individuals and cultures can be minimized or missed altogether.

As anti-establishment establishments, alternative institutions inherently house the forms they oppose as well as the ones they wish to pose. Yet an alternative always invokes a choice. That choice may involve moving to the margin or the center, but does not necessarily pit individuals against institutions. The two are, in fact, inseparable.

I think of alternatives as both homes and the families that dwell within them. This thinking is metaphorical, and it is crucial to choose an inclusive metaphor. Individuals are molded by their homes, and fulfilled only in and through their communities. Bodies of art are produced by those communities, not by artists alone.

The alternative institutions in which I have lived and worked all began as the self-conscious gatherings of communities. These ad hoc congregations became the physical, cultural, moral, and social ecologies that could sustain a new vision of art. Art, in turn, provided a reflective language of forms, words, and gestures that would be instrumental in making social ideals into realities.

November 1, 1994

Aspen, Colorado

Aspen Meadows, located on forty acres of picture-perfect Colorado mountain, is the home site of the Aspen Institute, an international organization whose aim is to address such universal human questions as justice, freedom, economic equality, and democracy.

The campus boasts original Bauhaus architecture by Herbert Bayer, whose modern design has been applied to the collection of meeting facilities and guest accommodations that form the compound. The programs that take place here are intended to enhance the abilities of leaders in business, government, the non-profit sector, academia and media. I enjoy the quiet and solitude (and the daily maid service) promised by the brochure, and see not a single other soul.

I am a temporary resident in a tasteful suite of living- and working-rooms as I think about writing this essay. The intentionality of the setting is consistent with those of the alternative spaces I consider: made on purpose, designed to reflect and promote a different world.

As I begin this writing, I look at the most recent of the Hallwalls calendars I regularly receive in the mail. "Ways in Being Gay '94"—four weeks of works by lesbians and gay men. Tonight David Butler will present *Keening Circle*. Butler promises that the ritual will allow all to "wail, lament, scream, cry, or stand silent as a community."

I am caught by the word "circle." Equalizing, never-ending. The campfire and the meditation wheel. The pull of the gravitational center of certain paintings. The "speaking pain" sphere of feminist consciousness-raising. My own circumference.

Within the sympathetic surround of the circle, alternative space is a safe and fertile state of mind and heart. Psychological and spiritual as well as political and physical, the spot closest to home and the bone lies within the skin.

My first experience of alternative space—the first room of my own—was located in a newly discovered chamber of my mind that opened as speech began. In this place, hidden from the harsh interventions of adults, I could become a first-person subject in a corporeal environment by engaging myself in what I would later understand as a metaphorical dialogue.

What began as a child's safe house of personal identity remained a lifelong structure of human selfhood that considered context and difference as intrinsic. Invented in the mind and in the air, the myriad forms of expression of this structure from then to now often uncovered a truth beyond facts and opinions, a truth that obeyed the more exacting requirements for authenticity and integrity of art.

This is the writing room.

June 19, 1953

Baltimore, Maryland

Rumors have it that the relatives of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, executed today, live in cognito in my neighborhood. Fathers and letter carriers proclaim their patriotism so as not to be implicated. Am I a "Jewish traitor," a "Commie," too? I am already spending too much time in "alternative space," pretending to practice the piano. I am already complaining about sitting in the "girls section" behind a curtain in the back of the Hebrew School classroom during Saturday services. I have already brought friends home for lunch without noticing that they are African-Americans whom my mother will not let into her house. Stopped action.

Jackson Pollock has painted *Blue Poles*, an action painting, on the floor of his New York studio. *Blue Poles* is the new space. Internal, but outdoors. A landscape that he can walk in and that you can walk in with your eyes. A big painting, much like Picasso's *Guernica* in sensation and soul, that holds my focus as it absorbs my peripheral vision.

Guernica, also a painting of inside and outside, is full of figures and trauma. *Blue Poles* is the same scene signed in the aftermath. I feel the solitary place of the artist in, yet apart, from the fray. Both paintings receive high praise. Each artist remains alone with the raw and wounded reality he has expressed. I have been sequestered with mine. But now I am not alone. Pollock was already lost in this web of wilderness when he visualized it dropped from sticks and spattered onto the canvas. He painted *Blue Poles* only a few despairing years before his death.

He is still somewhere in there, in a self-created no

one's land. The ambiance of the dense underbrush of forest and auras between trees seems to move out into the room, traveling paths to destinations far off the map. Though the "poles" anchor, gravity doesn't pull down to the center. "Painting is a state of being," Pollock said. "Painting is self-discovery. Every artist paints what he is."*

Away from the taint of Rosenbergs, carrying Pollock's space with me in my mind, I am sent to Cascade, Maryland, to summer camp.

Camp Louise is all girls in log cabins up a Blue Ridge Mountain hill. My bunk is a chosen family of twelve; the two counselors, admired parents without the terror. I will spend most summers learning and working in this humanistic, value-driven community until I am 21 years old.

I live the ten months for these two each year. I saw Pollock with *Blue Poles* in a magazine, but I have never heard of Rembrandt or visited a museum. My earliest connections with the arts come from friends and teachers here.

Singing, dancing, and acting culminate at the end of the two-month season in grand original shows whose productions rival those of professional troupes. These were the first plays and concerts I ever saw. They are more often than not about me, about us. Later I would know the deep places from which early feminist performance art emerged, because I had already experienced them here.

The ideas and forms that generated feminist projects and publications, educational theories, and creative work developed with colleagues and put into practice in Los Angeles in the 1970s were first explored here.

We girls tell secrets in the bunks while trying on each other's clothes, using makeup, smoking Marlboro cigarettes if we can get away with it. These are girl secrets, and I will know them all in the end. Home is here and now.

There are tangible and intangible gifts embedded in learning to swim in a natural lake or reading a friend's *No Exit* or *The Power of Sexual Surrender*, hearing about the history of knickers in a tune or admiring the non-anorexic health of an athletic counselor's legs.

So fueled, I dared to imagine an autobiographical route that wandered wildly from the straight and narrow chambers of my father's house and did not lead directly

to the kitchen, bedroom, and nursery of suburban stir. In my father's house and at school I am a train moving soundlessly, unknowingly, on the vocational track mandated for girls aspiring to the middle class in the 1950s. At camp, I'm off the track, in alternative space of a different design.

In its early years, Camp Louise was a short term "fresh air" vacation for young factory and office workers. Then the work of the founders turned to the rescue of children: Breathing space. Rest (from nuclear-strength families). Play (that you couldn't get away with at "home"). Companionship (not supervised by your mother). Self-expression (a heretofore nonexistent experience).

The interactions and social structures that made personal flowering possible also pointed the way to a more humane society and hinted at what could happen within it. The potentialities for my own life exceeded my most cherished imaginings.

Friday night, everyone filed into the darkened communal dining room wearing white. Lighting candles and sharing a Sabbath meal was followed the next day with short services. The "Jewish" part of my camp ritual was hardly noticeable beside the orthodoxy of my Orthodox Hebrew school. But this all-female assembly transcended any spiritual unity I ever felt in a synagogue. There is no iron curtain to the real, and for once no one is a traitor.

April 15, 1959 Washington, DC.

fidel Castro is here on an unofficial visit to tell Americans that his revolution is "humanistic." Of course we know he is a Commie. And so am I. I have taken the bus downtown to join the NAACP.

I was a member of the NAACP in 1959, the SDS and its Labor Committee a decade later, and Visual AIDS more than two decades after that. In between, I was a founder and worker in numerous activist groups. I participated in Hegel study collectives, marched with Dr. King to the Lincoln Memorial, and distributed pamphlets at Bethlehem Steel. This was collaborative and collective work made possible through organizational structures. Located in three different cities, these diverse organizations have formed and continue to carve out alternative spaces and move my notions about them forward to the present.

* Pollock talking to Seldon Rodman, published in *Conversations with Artists*, New York, 1957.

It is less common to think of publications as alternative spaces expressing communities. And writing is known to be a lonely vocation. But socially concerned written work is achieved just as often through cooperative composing as in contemplative creation. And alternative publishing has been entirely cooperative, especially when workers attempt to circumvent standard sites of printing, advertising, and distribution to fashion their own.

The printed page is one of the most significant spaces for declaring the unmentionable at the end of long silences. Publications also create conceptual ecologies. Writing about women's art in feminist publications, for example, presents creative work within the environment of the women's movement rather than simply as art within an art context. I worked on *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, in Baltimore in 1970, *Womanspace Journal* in Los Angeles in 1972, and *Chrysalis*, a magazine of women's culture, in 1976. Of the six books I have published on contemporary art, five have included collaborations. I continue, after 26 years in print, to choose mainly "alternative" venues and to collaborate even when it's painful.

June 27, 1969 New York City

A police raid at the Stonewall Inn causes a riot and starts the gay rights movement. This should be a lesson. Nobody is going to take it anymore. U.S. B-52s attacked Communist bases in Cambodia in March and students are rioting all over the country. I am in school in Frederick and Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, DC, now for the twentieth year. I earn graduate degrees and riot in my spare time. I never drop out because I believe that education is an alternative space off the housewife track.

I am wrong. My formal training in art history touches briefly on only two female artists and none of color in ten years. I remain ignorant of the work that will become my main concern until I am a teacher. Meanwhile, the train roars at my heels.

My Ph.D. study is the art and criticism of the Washington Color School painters. Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Thomas Downing, Howard Mehring, Gene Davis, and Leon Berkowitz are known for their

color-soaked hard-edged forms on unsized canvas made during the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Morris Louis is actually Morris Louis Bernstein, a nice Jewish boy from Baltimore and, like me, a Jewish traitor. Louis had already failed to become a dentist or accountant like his male siblings and friends. He makes his superb outsized paintings of the 1950s in a suburban garage adjoining his Maryland home.

By the time I met Louis through my research, he was dead. In alternative space this doesn't matter so much. I felt more kinship with him as I proceeded than almost anyone else in the group.

I knew Louis. It was a psychic and visual knowing, an alternative but common method of study using intuition and the eye to build a comprehensive connoisseurship. I knew, for instance, when his paintings had been hung upside down by dealers and owners. I sensed the private man behind his stony public silence.

Morris Louis's paintings from 1953 until his death eight years later occupy new space. The connection between perception and vision, and between personal identity and collective consciousness in this art demanded another kind of space for an enlarged and enhanced artistic identity.

The soaking of the paint into unsized canvas wedded the material and metaphorical. Although traces of the artist's hand are often effaced in the execution, the resulting radical abstraction is never technocratic. The unique visual properties of these paintings heighten their subjective human content by more purely expressing it.

The Washington Color School was never geometric paintings on an abstract white wall to me. I knew Tom Downing, Howard Mehring, Leon Berkowitz, Gene Davis (all now deceased), and dozens of other artists in the electrifying local scene in Washington, DC, in the '60s. (Kenneth Noland had defected to New York.) My interest in these artists first came from knowing them and their aspirations, and was further sparked when I studied their work in detail in the late '60s.

Many of the Washington Color School artists incorporate circles in their works, and even more organize their paintings from the center. Louis sometimes centered his great veils with a crease in the canvas for emphasis.

I was as interested in the community of the Washington Color School as in its individual artists and

their works. Neither any single painting nor the body of works as a whole can be understood without taking this environment into consideration.

The "school" in its name meant the geographical worksite of the artists and the kinship of their works. I found, however, that an educational institution created by some of these artists—The Washington Workshop Center of the '40s and early '50's—also held a key to the meaning of their work.

The Washington Workshop Center—artist-driven studio spaces, classes, and more—offered community-building and education in an alternative setting that ended up changing the very persons of the artists involved. In turn, each was in "place" to create a new art genre that would express a fresh, uncharted self-consciousness.

October 6, 1973 Los Angeles, CA

The Yom Kippur War startles Jew-watchers and Commies alike. The US supplies Israelis; the Soviet Union, Arabs. Nobody's going to take it anymore.

Artist Judy Chicago, graphic designer Sheila de Bretteville, and I are preparing for the opening of The Woman's Building. We are Jewish traitors. Judy and Sheila, both "red diaper" babies, are the offspring of actual Communists. We have all taught feminist art and design programs at the California Institute of the Arts. Now we are gathering our own community.

I was completing my dissertation on the Washington Color School and teaching at The Maryland Institute when I left the East Coast for Los Angeles in the Fall of 1972. I knew that my education had not been a solution. A Ph.D. program had not prevented my subjugation to a brutal rape, offered an alternative to doing it all—work, study, and every area of "women's work" besides—or uncovered the buried history for which I so hungered. I thought of proposing a feminist art class. Now I had the opportunity to teach in the Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts with Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. I moved.

Almost immediately, Judy and I began talking about creating an educational institution free of art schools and universities. Sheila joined us soon and we began to dream a school for women in the arts that would also form the basis for a working community.

Like those at Camp Louise, we were all women who were bound by common values and visions. The Circle, the sorority of those who have served as workers at Louise for a number of years, held these traditions in place over 72 years. Like the Washington Workshop Center, we originally wished to educate the general public but most significantly educated ourselves.

I have been a teacher and student all of my life. My professional teaching has spanned more than 20 years. Although I mostly write now and teach only occasionally, I am still drawn to the alternative institution, or at least the chance to create the alternative classroom, knowing already that it is not enough.

The social life of The Woman's Building contained an ambition far beyond any classroom. We wanted to prepare the ground for a new art to emerge that reflected the personal and social structures we built and the growth and change of those structures over time. And we knew that such a place could not float in Los Angeles. We envisioned a center for women's culture that would house galleries, programs and conferences, presses, bookstores, a cafe.... Over eighteen years, numerous organizations, exhibitions, and events, and literally generations of people occupied that space.

The Feminist Studio Workshop, an all-female educational program, preceded The Woman's Building and became an important part of it. Dozens of teaching structures ranged from weekend educators' and children's workshops, to the three year Lesbian Art Project.

January 1, 1977 Los Angeles, California

I am embarking on The Lesbian Art Project, a full time multi-formatted study conducted with colleagues and students who have formed a collective. Orange County State Senator John Briggs, meanwhile, will campaign for a statewide ballot measure that would ban gays and lesbians from teaching in California public schools. The space to which an alternative has been posed is shrinking. Backlash yields anti-feminism, homophobia, censorship, and ever more outrageous, irreverent alternatives.

Censorship is also an institution: the institution of censoring, examining in order to suppress or delete anything found "objectionable." But I think of censorship also as an institution that affects the inside and outside,

the spoken and unspoken, the seen and unseen, and thus the past, present, and future.

Founded in 1975 during the heyday of artist-instigated public venues, Hallwalls is one of the few sturdy survivors of the lean economic period that followed its first few years. The alternative spaces that still stand do so now against the cultural poverty of more than a decade that continues to push at the contemporary arts with ever more manifest force.

Hallwalls has had staying power. But more than that: a fat chronology of events and exhibitions gives me a sense of the number and consistency of innovators and innovations, outsiders and risk-takers supported and presented in Buffalo over these twenty years.

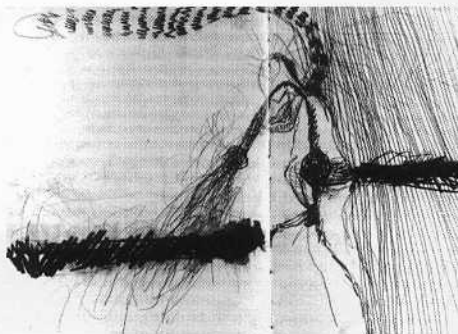
The nature, impact, and value of alternative spaces of the 1970s is now a hotly contested area of revisionist art history. Have we purveyors of the alternative introduced crucial information through art and education that makes American art more all-American? Or have we eschewed aesthetic discrimination and harmed contemporary art by pointing out racial, gender, and other forms of discrimination that kept many out of the canon? Why are these the only alternatives? Finally, what have we learned?

November 30, 1994
New York City

I am grateful to the Anderson Ranch Center, Snowmass, Colorado, for an artist-in-residence stay at the Aspen Institute's Aspen Meadows campus during November of 1994, where I gathered much of the thinking and began the writing of this piece.

Arlene Raven, Ph.D., is an art historian who has published six books on contemporary art and written criticism for The Village Voice and a diverse range of publications including Ms., October, High Performance, and The Daily News since 1969.

PERSONAL HISTORIES



Andrew Deutsch, untitled sketch inspired by Hallwalls concert, 1995.

"There is something going on here, but in order to find out just what it is, each of those present must find his way through a facade of 'nothing happening.'"

—Barbara Bloom, quoted in the *Poetic Resemblance exhibition catalogue*, 1986

1. MOMENTS IN TIME

KEITH SANBORN (*filmmaker, curator, teacher*): Working with/at Hallwalls was great for me, transformative in ways I can't begin to articulate. And I guess that's the problem with writing: beginning. I can't really figure out how to summarize it all. I do remember one story that Michael Harvey (filmmaker, photographer, et al.) told when he came to visit. At the time, he was showing at Metro Pictures these pieces that were paintings with photographs embedded, or incorporated, into them. Someone asked him: "Is that photography or painting?" He answered: "Feinting."

RICHARD WICKA The Proper Tool for the Job

I was helping Hallwalls install the electrical in the new space at the Tri-Main building. One of the biggest problems we had was installing boxes and fixtures into the concrete. We tried a loaded gun that blasts a rivet into the concrete. Too loud, too dangerous, and it only works about 50% of the time. We tried concrete drill bits. Slow and tiresome work.

Enter: a savior.

I was at the electrical supply house. Kevin was waiting on me. I told him the problem. "That's no problem. You need a hammer drill."

"What's that?"

He brought one out and demonstrated how it not only turns like a drill but pummels at the same time. What normally takes 15 minutes to drill in concrete, takes 15 seconds. I was skeptical. He kept reassuring me. I

bought it. I went to Hallwalls. I began the electrical work. Astonishing.

Roxanne looked at me. "I don't know what's more remarkable, the drill or your enthusiasm." She was right. I was so elated that I started singing a song to the new drill. I felt like some caveman who had discovered a new tool and began to imagine how the quality of his life would be improved.

The afternoon passed.

The sun shone in our windows.

The trains went by and blew their horns.

The work flowed.

Media artist/paralegal Richard Wicka has presented work at Hallwalls many times over the last 10 years and is a faithful audience member at most events. He was elected president of the organization's Board of Directors in 1992.

ALFONSO VOLO

These Too (?)

I was first introduced to Hallwalls in 1984 by Ed Gnirke and Robin Dodds. So that makes it ten years: a Hallwalls half-lifer! Here's a few moments from the years that I've been hanging around:

4.85. Robin Dodds installs a wall of small works for my show. A diptych's separated. I ask, "Would it make any difference if they were moved back together?" Robin answers, "They can be moved, but it would make a difference."

9.86. *Retroactive.* In Katharine Kuharic's "Vanitas: the Great Wood," Metsu's rooster hangs from nowhere. It's hit the end of the rope and it klunks its head on Van Ruisdale's river bank. He's out or dead. Ribera's angel trumpets. Caravaggio's fruit rots in the river... The paint's weight.

1.87. Renewing my membership, I say, "I haven't paid my dues yet." Cathy Howe looks up at me and slowly replies, "You haven't?" The next second we're laughing.

5.88. *Patterns: The Tongue in The Position When at Rest* installation. Tony Labat's video-surveilled mice will live in the just-vacated blue room of Barbara Bloom's *Esprit de l'Escalier*. I'm vertiginous as I repaint the blue room white.

Before his opening, Tony, the curators, and a few artists eat at the Palma de Oro. Tony relishes black bean soup with oxtails and has two servings. A waitress tells him how, once, she was almost selected as a TV beauty queen.

11.88. *Ways in Being Gay* exhibition. Craig Keller declares, MY WORK IS MY STATEMENT on the yellow and black sign above the charred, bandaged bulb on the pedestal.

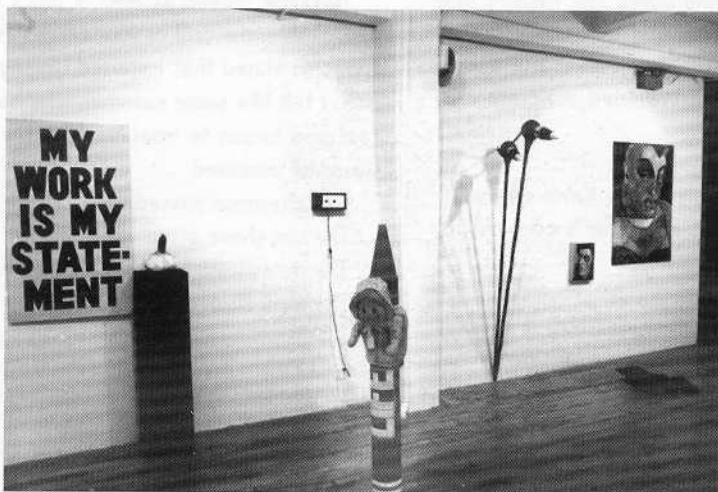
1.89. "Sin" Members Show. Cathy Howe inserts red light into all the gallery's wall outlets. Eric Jensen's diorama stamps SIN on everybody's foreheads.

5.89. Chuck Agro runs into the gallery yelling, "There's free pizza at the Bijou!" Then he runs out again.

6.89. I'm with Frank Petric. We get dirt for his installation. He's just shrugged off a nail-pierced thumb. His small, cluttered car heads through the downpour towards the huge Key Bank excavation. He drives down a steep, muddy incline, into the pit. He runs through the rain. After awhile, he lugs back a heaping bin of mud. He's soaked and elated.

1.90. Sara Kellner, Craig Keller and I are at Kathy Sherin's house coordinating the WNY Artists' Slide File. Afterwards, we celebrate Craig's birthday with a cake Kathy has baked.

1.90. "History" Members Show. Artists in the show submit copy art for 250 unbound, plastic-bagged artists' books. Ron Ehmke puts a piece of a jigsaw puzzle into each book. Charles Wright paints a gray wash over the white wall before he prints the word HISTORY. I see, lifted from the bare wall, delicate gray pentimenti, the once-hidden titles of past shows.



Ways In Being Gay exhibition, 1988. Gallery view.

1.90. House-o'-Pork sings tributes to Great Moments in Hog History. I get their leaflet, *Meet Your Meat*, which extols the virtues of swine. After the performance, my car battery's dead. It's a freezing Saturday night and everything's closed. Chris Hill and Tony Conrad rescue me. I hook up the jumper cables and Chris, in her Incan hat, revs up her car while Tony scans the radio dial. Flashes of songs and words reach me. My breath steams.

2.91. *FluxAttitudes*. I'm scraping paint off window panes. I can't find a scraper so I use a small razor blade. Rirkrit Tiravanija's across the gallery in a meeting. Someone touches my back. It's Rirkrit with a brand-new scraper. At the do-it-yourself opening, I sit beneath a display table and paper the wall with photocopied asses. The Gulf War starts.

11.91. "First Thursday." It's a snowy night, and I read my story "The Duck Man," which is based on Posada's prints. One scene's set beneath an aurora. The next night, a bright aurora, shaped like a huge pink wheel, appears in the sky. I gaze at it for a long time, and freeze.

9.92. *Bra Comforter*, Anne Wayson and Courtney Egan. On the *Bra Comforter*, Anne opens a maternity bra's cup, and inside is a tiny summer landscape.

9.92. *Written in Sand* installation. It rains lightly. I help shovel tons of sand into wheelbarrows which are carted up the freight elevator to Hallwalls. After I'm done, Karen Finley shakes my hand and says, "Thanks, Al!"

10.92. *The Second Skin*. Surrounding the exhibition brochure's large title, THE SECOND SKIN, are small, faint, reversed letters, ink soaking through the paper from the enclosed artists' statements.

9.93. *Star Trek* Fundraiser. Sara Kellner's mood ring is aqua. We cut and tie white string. We're trying to hang a flimsy, cardboard model of the Starship Enterprise from the ceiling of the Vault.

11.93. *White Men in Suits*. I'm helping Brian Conley with his installation *Ascension*. It is a cluster of old clothes which are stuffed with recycled plastic jugs. It's framed by a wall of shredded money. I stuff jugs into clothes. The jugs smell like puke, and tiny shards of glass cut into my palms. Brian says he doesn't like to own many possessions. He carries a tiny black sketch pad in his pocket.

1.94. Before Hallwalls is built at Tri-Main, Ed Cardoni walks me through the huge empty interior. He describes the future spaces. I see them in my imagination. After months of volunteer labor, Hallwalls materializes.

In addition to the above, Al Volo is a visual artist whose work has been shown at Hallwalls many times over the last 10 years, and a longtime member of the Visual Art Committee.



Anne Wayson and Courtney Egan,
Bra Comforter, 1991-92.

2. CLOUDY RECOLLECTIONS

ANNIE FERGERSON

A Little Piece of Something...

In a box on a shelf with some other trinkets—my souvenir shaker from Louisiana, a picture of my family in front of Lincoln's Memorial in 1976, a shard of glass from a former beau—is a box full of souvenirs from my years in Buffalo.

Right now I'm pulling out ... something, a little piece of something. I think it's a part of a balloon ... Now I know: that night in the gallery in 1989 when Pat Oleszko was doing crazy balloon dances and everyone was showing their butts. Oh, how I laughed!

Wait a minute. I never saw Pat Oleszko. Never saw butts or balloons. That was "before my time" (a phrase I heard, then used, many times throughout my years in Buffalo). Collective memories abound around Hallwalls: people "remember" things they never witnessed, become nostalgic for events which predate them.

On closer examination I see that this piece of balloon is actually a tiny bit of the program from my first Hallwalls event: Ilse Gassinger, from Austria, showing her videos. It's 1990. I've been in Buffalo for 10 days, after 26 years in the Northwest, and the disappointments have been many. Why does the college radio station keep playing The Cure? What's with all the sub and donut shops? Where are all the mountains, the micro-breweries, the turkey-and-avocado sandwiches? So my first impression of the risers in the Vault, the cement pillars, the funky beer smell, and the regulars—a group variously referred to as "the community," "the Artpark 18," and "those Hallwalls people"—is full of skepticism. But after the program is over I'll reluctantly admit—even though I talk with no one—I'm impressed. There is high energy, people seem engaged, and I get a general feeling there is commitment here: to art, to artists, to the structures that support art.

I'm embarrassed now: on still closer examination, I realize this is actually a UPS slip from a package sent to Hallwalls for Julia Scher's *Buffalo Under Surveillance* installation, which I coordinated in the fall of 1992. The slip is from a very harried moment when I need a check with a board member's signature plus Ed's. The signatures will take an hour to round up—and I need that check NOW. My growing frustration leads to a moment

of personal revelation: perhaps the idealized world of non-profit art centers has its share of problems too. Instead of functioning outside the capitalist system, it exists very much within that system. 90 percent of the problems non-profits face—from funding cuts and threats of censorship to the bureaucracy behind my wait for a check—have to do with money. When I left the film industry in Seattle, I felt like I was escaping the demands of the commercial world for a safe haven in the arts. I began to realize there was no running, no hiding.

Wait. It's not part of that UPS slip after all; why would I want to preserve a memory like that? It's really a scrap from the program for the first screening of my own work at Hallwalls: *Active Landscapes*, curated by Andrew Deutsch in April 1992. Andy had pulled me aside after I screened "Fishing" at a Squeaky Wheel Work-In-Progress. (I feel like a plug for Squeaky Wheel is in order here, but I guess I'll wait for their 10th Anniversary Book.) I thought I had done something wrong or that I owed Hallwalls editing money. But no, it was something good: he liked my tape and was going to include it as part of a show. My head swelled; I felt like my work had some legitimacy. The screening gave me the kind of boost that is so important to a beginning artist. Events like this one—those which included my own tapes as well as many others featuring visiting artists—provided many of my happiest memories of Hallwalls.

You've probably guessed by now that this whole souvenir business is a ruse. I have no piece of paper, no souvenir. Nostalgia and memory, myth and history: my brain sometimes fails to distinguish between them. But as Hallwalls celebrates its 20th Anniversary I try to make meaningful links between my own remembered past and the art, artists, curators, and administrators that passed through and that continue to inhabit the place. I hope—well, I know—that my own artwork and the relationships I establish with other art centers will benefit from the time I spent in Buffalo with Hallwalls, Squeaky Wheel, and CEPA. Good luck, live long, and, well, gosh, thanks!

In addition to the ties listed here, Annie Fergerson guest-curated 2495: Building on Labor, the first video series to be screened at Hallwalls' new home [April 1994].

TONY BILLONI

In the Ink of the Night

Hoo boy, what a night, it coulda mighta lasted a decade or two. What was in that punch? (Never trust beers with numbers in their name.) I tried calling Bernie & Anita; they seem to have a 908 area code. Wha' happen? All we did was go out for a good time. As usual there was nothing to do. So me and the gang from Kenmore—Mark F, Brian & Paul S, Dave M, Jack N, Judy & Willy B, Nick N, George S, Tom R, Julie, Pat, Mary Kay, Doreen, Pauline and about 100 others—started at my house, in my (or was it Mark's?) basement. (Keep the door to the dark room closed so the smoke don't go upstairs.) Until at least 2:00 in the morning. Then it was off to the clubs. The gay discos. Disco was there joining all us wild fun-seeking faces energywise in the ink of the night. The Johnny and the Dicks were at Hallwalls on ... some dinky little street off of two other streets. (We sure found it later, when George, The Jumpers, The Secrets, The A-Tones and about 3 other bands played there with 50-cent beers. Cheap beer, always a good part of the night.) From there we went over to the Masthead and wherever else was having our noise or showing Craig & Mark C's cartoons and super 8mm concert films. Then we caused a lot of damage at Pepper's playing in front of the Bush Tetras and seeing the birth of the Fems. John Lurie made an easy shift from quaint 15-minute jazz splashes to longer, sleeker bumpy Lounge Lizard rides in the Continental. When we left the Continental we made sure we brought back lots of new "pals" to the practice space. (Sinks always seem to fall off walls after 3 A.M.) It never got too late to get Der Fuhmens, Bulletproof Claudia, The Vores, or Tony C on violin into a more visible Hallwalls on Main Street downtown for a groovy New Year's or some other odd night. And we visited with Boris Policeband, Eric Bogosian, Ann Magnuson, and other assorted Lower East Side gadabouts. (The breakdancers that flew by later did great, except the homes at the New Skateland on East Ferry didn't quite feel they was as hot as the local crew.) When Gary S came in for a rock-n-roll film or videos by a Max's Kansas City-tinged band like Gun Club, we would always leave to crawl in style to Trunis' Vermilion Room. He also took us to meet Paul at the

Little Harlem. (Many a classy drink or kiss shared in the waning hours of Michigan Street.)

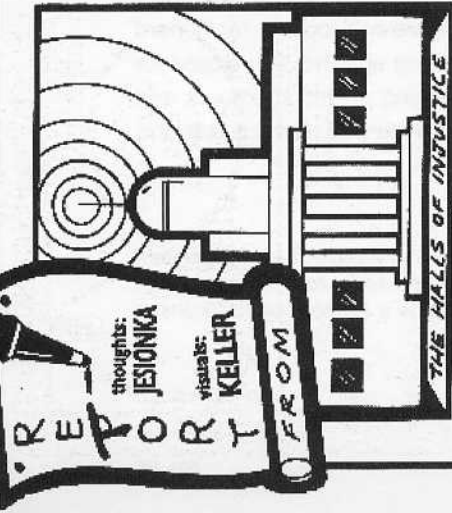
And I'm still looking for Bernie or Anita. What happened to Ann? I think they all left to go to the Hat Trick in Kenmore. Could it have been the Spectrum on Elmwood when we saw Toots & the Maytals, or the second time Talking Heads came to Buffalo? Maybe we left them at that party where Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler got into a fight with those leather punks. (And everything costs just \$2.00 to get in!) The night rolls on and jobs



New Year's Party featuring The Dynamic Rockers breakdance group, Dec. 31, 1983.

are lost all over Buffalo and less and less seem to care. Plenty—Karl K, Steve G, Baby G, Emily XYZ, Nick N, Julie, Pat, Joel, Pam, Jack & Judy, Lee C—go on to NYC. Some come back, some don't, some come back and go back—it was just so fast, so late I couldn't quite tell who was doing what. We had to stumble across a couple of stiffies though we weren't looking really hard and the sun was about coming up. The Jam closed for the night and we were hanging on for afterhours and then off to some park or elsewhere to continue with this nothing we called fun.

Tony Billoni (Performance Curator, 1982-83) is an independent events coordinator. He has presented solo performances at Hallwalls many times, and became a member of the Board of Directors in 1995.



WITH MY STUDIES IN TORONTO COMPLETE, I RECEIVED A GRANT TO APPRENTICE IN BUFFALO WITH THE FAMOUS PAUL SHARITS! MY LAST OBSTACLE... THE U.S. BORDER.

MY DREAM WITHIN REACH!

ENTERING THE U.S.

NOPE!

ANYTHING TO DECLARE?

I EAGERLY BEGAN MY TASKS IN PAUL'S FRANTIC WORLD.

1972 VINAGE

I LEARNED HOW TO VIEW,

EDIT,

SOON WE WERE OFF... EDUCATING THE WORLD WITH EMPOWERING IMAGES & IDEAS.

"FACTORY MUSIC"

HOW TO HANDLE CRITICS...

THIS GIVES ME AN IDEA FOR A NEW INSTALLATION!

SHARITS IN...

"DOWN JONES RALLIES AGAIN!"

HE INSTILLED INTEREST IN OUR INSTALLATIONS.

HMMM

YES I SEE!

FAB!


INTERESTING INSTALLATION

IT WAS PRECISELY THEN THAT A ROBUST CLOUD OF DECEPTION AND DECEIT BEGAN TO FORM...

ANALYTICAL STUDIES: DAMAGED FILM LOOP

I EVEN DID HIS BOOKS!

WARITS
BECOMING
BAG FOR
SEE HALLS!
MUST BE
STOPPED



GENERAL GRINDER

DEADLY OR

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

PRIVATE BENEFIT

100

Figure 1

PAULY,
PAULY, PAULY!
THIS JUST
WON'T DO!

1

2007年10月10日

)))

DIAGNOSTIC SEIZURE COMPARISON



PAUL

 REST IN PEACE

10

DR. BILLEY FINK: Came from a chicken farm, earned 3 degrees and came to Buffalo. I spent 15 years as a volunteer in Attica & got to know many criminals, spent then many years with refugees and traveled to many Central American countries to know the life there. When I joined Hallwalls my mind took a leap forward, opened or stretched sometimes until it hurt, as I attended gay pride events, met Rosie the Scarlot Harlot, was invited to touch a man with cerebral palsy and his girlfriend. I've heard lectures by wonderful entertainers, Black poets and essayists, saw Holly Hunter in her nude performance at Buff State. Hallwalls changed my life & I continue to grow and stretch my mental limits to the utmost.

Dr. Billy Fink, a retired high school guidance counselor, is a regular audience member at Hallwalls events. She wrote these notes during a film screening for inclusion in this publication. [Editor's note: There is no evidence of a nude performance by Holly Hunter in Hallwalls' records.]

3. FAMILY VALUES

JUDITH JACKSON

I was born a negro and raised as a black youth by parents who were called colored by they mammas and they papas who were part colored, part injun, 'but most part irish' and no part coon or jiggaboon that the redneck crackahs said they were 'cause they couldn't forget we were the sons and daughters of cotton-pickin' niggahs and wouldn't remember we were children of kings and queens in africa way back before it was ever called africa and there was ever such a thing as a king or queen. I have nothing but to consider the alternative.

Performance artist Judith Jackson performed her work WOMBman WARS at Hallwalls in May of 1993; it was subsequently produced by Ujima Theatre Company in September 1993 with support from Hallwalls. This piece was written for this publication.

ROSEMARY LYONS

Three from the Ice House

Writing about Hallwalls is akin to writing about a member of the family that you have watched develop and grow over the years. When the gallery was perched in the Essex Ice House I felt "out of the loop" because I was mom to two toddlers. Many of my friends were involved, so I did go to the openings. There are three works that struck me profoundly in those early years:

- * Robert Longo built a Grecian Federalist edifice with pillars and pediment. Behind the columns, into the brick wall, he engraved the word TRUTH. Maybe he wasn't just a snot-nosed kid...

- * Cindy Sherman in the early days seemed to be

overshadowed by the blustery Longo in person, but her work had an insistence and intellectual elegance that was jarring. I remember seeking her out to tell her how much I enjoyed it. In my imagination she was supremely self-confident, but when I actually praised her work she was surprised and pleased.

- * The third work that will always live in my memory was a watercolor that my four-year-old son had done with George Howell. Josh talked about the painting and George wrote down everything he said.

Several of artist/educator Rosemary Lyons' paintings and performances were presented at Hallwalls over the course of two decades, including Orchid Chapel, The Stonehenge Series, and Feels Like a Hundred.

CHERYL JACKSON
Mrs. Hallwalls

I think I am married to Hallwalls. It's not a dream; more like a deep, dark vault where I finally met my family, one member at a time. First came my long-lost sister, Chris Hill, who I figured could not be *my* Chris Hill because my Chris Hill lived in Cleveland, and I had just moved to Buffalo, not Cleveland, and the Buffalo Chris Hill was probably a man anyway. But I was wrong, and we were reunited the day my video class went to Hallwalls. Nepotism being what it is, I quickly got a job there myself and thought, "Wow, now I can get into all these cool events for free!"

Next I met my father, who's been trying to ditch me again ever since, but he's on tenure so he won't leave town. (My mother warned me this would happen. But I was glad when my sister finally saw him for what he is and moved in with the local cable installer—who lets everyone in our family get free HBO.) Then I met my husband—at Hallwalls, of course. Even though he always wore mirrored sunglasses, I somehow knew he couldn't take his eyes off me. (By this time I knew I was psychic, like my sister.) As one of the bad little children of Hallwalls, I started to stalk him from behind the official video documentation camera. Eventually, though, we sat down for some artichoke hearts at my sister's place, then some coffee, and the next thing we knew it was breakfast at the Broadway Market on Easter. By this point I had already met my son Ron—who disguised himself as my best friend until I married his father—and pretty soon Ron met *his* long-lost sister Annie, who became my eldest daughter.

The wedding was certainly a family affair; all our Hallwalls relatives (and *their* relatives) were there. We didn't have any money, but this Italian cousin Tony, who owns a bar on the West Side and looks just like my husband, gave us all the booze for free, which was real nice of him. And the best man's girlfriend Elizabeth (who is also related from back in Italy) made all the pasta, pizza, wings, and even the cake, so now she's like a sister to me, too. My sort-of sister's ex, Freddy (who's just like a brother to me) paid for the

band—he's in the mob, I think, so my husband looks up to him. (They turned out to be quite entertaining, in that black-velvet-painting kinda way.) At the wedding, all the children took turns playing their favorite disco and country tunes on the jukebox when the band took a break, and videotaping everything that went on. It was the first public-access-TV wedding in the world. (Somehow, I knew Hallwalls would provide me with a lot of these sorts of firsts. We show the video on *Artwaves* every year on our anniversary and everyone calls up to reminisce about what a drunken good time they had.)

Unfortunately, my real father showed up drunk (he'd been in a fight and had band-aids all over his face) and started to scream obscenities at the guests having sex in the grass until they all got fed up and went to the local motel/bowling alley where they could party in peace. (I *knew* that was going to happen. At least no fights broke out.) My husband's long-lost brother and sister came to the wedding, too, and stayed for a week getting everyone stoned up on the roof every night. Later we heard that they stuffed all these naked people in a shower and then tipped them over, but we were on a free trip to Vegas for the honeymoon (also thanks to my sister's ex) so I can't say for sure.

Easter turns out to be a lucky day for us, because our youngest daughter was born then, three years later. She's lucky, too, to have such a big, happy family, and a big new house in a factory on Main Street. (As it turns out, she's also psychic. They've already called to book her for a summer gig at Lily Dale, which should really help with the college fund.) But I'll let her tell her own story when it's time for the 30th anniversary. (I know we'll all still be here!)

Cheryl Jackson served as Hallwalls' Arts-in-Education Coordinator and Assistant Technical Director from 1987-89. Subsequently and currently Executive Director of Squeaky Wheel, she married Edmund Cardoni, Executive Director of Hallwalls, in 1991. Their daughter Flora, born in 1994, is not yet employed by either organization.

GARY JUDKINS (*former Hallwalls board member*): I joined the board in 1988. We were looking for new board members, and Norma Kassirer suggested Kathy O'Hara, who was already interested in Hallwalls. We served together for a year before I asked her out; one of the first dates we went on was the opening night of the New Music Festival. We got married in 1990.

Our daughter Alanna was born in January 1992, the first child of a "Hallwalls couple"—one that formed at Hallwalls. Ed [Cardoni] and Cheryl [Jackson]'s daughter Flora is the second. Of course, these are just the Hallwalls children of record. There may be others we don't know about....

GAIL NICHOLSON (*various positions, CEPA Gallery, 1984-present*): I remember Bill Currie's kids going through my desk, playing with stamp pads, anything they could find. He didn't bring them into the office very often, but I actually really liked it when he did, because there were no other kids around. [Hallwalls video curator] Chris Hill and I have talked about that a lot, about how so few people we know have children. I think it's partly a matter of economics, partly a decision to live a certain kind of lifestyle.

One reason this is an issue for me is that my siblings who live in Syracuse all have kids. They've been married for quite a while—my brother married his first girlfriend—and I'm not sure they understand what I do for a living. Their friends all have kids, too; they're all pretty much in the same boat. They have little experience of life without children.

There are a lot of issues at stake here: my family generally doesn't know anybody who's gay, or anybody who has chosen any other alternative lifestyle, or at least these are not things we discuss. I'm sure their lives are more complicated than I give them credit for. I'm very close to my family, but something is missing, there's no shared plane on which I can explain what I do and why it's important (to me, at least).

I've been at CEPA on and off for 11 years; I'm 41 now, and I'm even more passionate about some of the interests I had when I first came to this place. But I also feel more connected to some of those aspects of my own family I rejected earlier; I just adopted a child, for instance.

I can see how non-profits would function as a surrogate family for some people. One of the most important aspects of working here is the place—and I don't mean just Hallwalls—that we're all building, investing in, psychologically or whatever. As you age in it, or with it, you come to see the whole fabric of it, the whole texture. It's not about making enough money or bringing in a paycheck, it's about the whole family, a contribution to something greater. Looking at all this from my 40s, I don't see it as a year-to-year thing, it's much broader than that. There's a political dimension to that passion.

Gail Nicholson's comments here are taken from a 1995 interview with Ronald Ehmke.

MAKING THE MYTH, LIVING THE LEGACY

CHARLES A. WRIGHT, JR. (*Exhibitions Curator, 1989-91*): I remember walking into my first NAAO meeting and everybody saying, "Oh, you're from Hallwalls!" No one in the field ever saw a show there. The most that anyone has ever seen of Hallwalls is a calendar. The organization has this aura, this mythology. Hallwalls, in a lot of ways, is a myth. In fact, the place really doesn't exist.

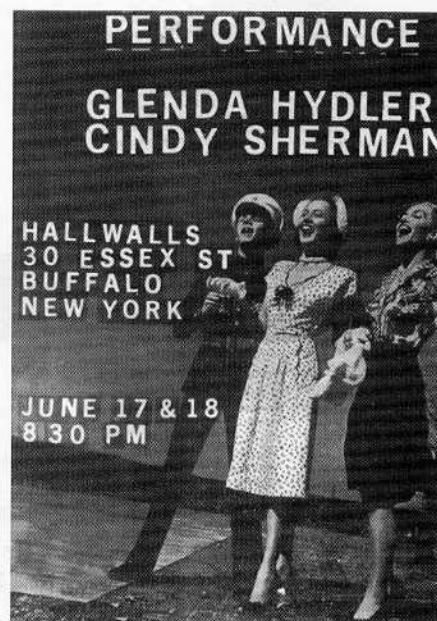
Excerpted from a 1994 phone interview with Elizabeth Licata.

Hallwalls' founders had a keen sense of the future significance of their undertaking. The poster for *Working on Paper: Developing the Idea* [1975] is helpfully labeled "The First Exhibit at Hallwalls"—for the benefit of future art historians?—and just about everything that happened at the Essex Street icehouse was meticulously documented for posterity. Given that much of the work being created and exhibited there was concerned with the appropriation of mass-media imagery, it should perhaps come as no surprise that the artists themselves would soon become media icons in their own right.

As early figures like Robert Longo and Cindy Sherman moved on to New York and international celebrity, the organization they had helped to create also acquired a certain level of notoriety. Hallwalls was inevitably mentioned in stories on the rising art stars, although its complex history was generally oversimplified. (An almost obligatory component of many reporters' profiles of the two artists is The Blizzard Anecdote: a May 1988 *ARTnews* story on Longo mentions that Jonathan Borofsky was stuck at Hallwalls for several days during a blizzard, for instance, while *Esquire's* profile of Sherman finds Martha Wilson snowbound.) As Steve Gallagher writes in his essay for this volume, subsequent generations of programmers were both indebted to their predecessors and determined to take the organization in new directions. In the process, they created mythologies of their own.

CARRIE RICKEY, "Babes on West Broadway," *The Village Voice*, July 9, 1980: Hot Flash for a producer looking for a new bottle to package the old wine of a Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney script: transform the youthful malcontents into fledgling artists tired of waiting for the big break. The scenario begins with a powwow of talented artists anxious to strut their own stuff. Their common obstacle: that the most interesting art (i.e. theirs) just isn't being shown in galleries and museums. Caught in the catch-22 of not being able to exhibit work because they haven't got an exhibition record, they brainstorm their way past the obstacle: "I'VE GOT AN IDEA!" ejaculates one, "LET'S RUN OUR OWN GALLERY!"

... The shooting script for an artists' co-op does parallel *Babes on Broadway*, and even a documentary on Hallwalls would have the same youthful exuberance, although a slightly grittier texture. The documentary scenario begins, appropriately, during the dead of winter, 1974, in a turn-of-the-century ice-house in Buffalo—the home of a noncommunity of 10 artists at loose ends. Ringleaders Charles Clough, 23, and Robert Longo, 21, enlist the aid of fellow art students and neighbors to renovate the corridor between their two studios. Once done, they dub it Hallwalls, and it becomes a nexus for tenant artists and local students to exhibit work and enjoy community.



June 17-18, 1978

LEE EIFERMAN

And That's Where Pop Culture Comes In [1995]

FADE IN

INT. PICASSO'S ATELIER — DAY

Midday. Clear, northern light bathes the studio evenly.

PICASSO, age 44, surrounded by half-completed drawings and paintings, is YELLING at DORA across the room. She holds WET RAGS.

PICASSO

Dora! Put it down. Now, put it down, dear.

DORA

"Dear"! You call me "dear"? Did you call *her* that? Is that what you called Marie-Therese?

She LIGHTS a match. The rags burst into flame. The flames lick the edges of *Guernica*, Picasso's famous painting.

EMILY (V.O.)

Do we really need that line, "Picasso's famous painting"?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

Hallwalls, circa 1975. Dead of winter. 11:00 p.m. The room is crowded with PEOPLE shuffling from kitchen to living room to fireplace.

Broken furniture, waiting to be burned, lines the brick walls. Priceless street finds are stacked in rows facing the TV.

Mary Hartman plays in the background. Most eyes are glued to the TV.

A few FRIENDS sit near the fire talking idly. A bottle of bourbon, some joints float through the crowd.

NICHOLAS

And another thing: how does she light the turpentine-soaked rags without burning herself?

MICHAEL

How about something more classic...

CUT TO:

INT. PICASSO'S ATELIER — DAY

Dora HOLDS a CHILD in her arms. She aims a GUN to his young head.

DORA

I've given up everything to follow you to Paris! My home! My life! My family! I'll teach you about loyalty.

LANIE (V.O.)

Hate it! A mother killing her kid. I just don't buy it.

CUT TO:

int. living room — night

Same crowd. Same location.

MICHAEL

It worked for Medea.

LANIE

That's what we're doing here? Bloody, patriarchal, woman-as-monster stories?

JONAH

Yeah, and it's so linear. What about something looser?

DEWEY

This Picasso thing is getting on my nerves. What about...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

A: A jade plant sits in the clear winter sun. Hush, it's so quiet.

B: We are in the kitchen. Stacks of bacon. Fish Friday. She's telling me how she brought shame "on her family." Which is why her father drives through the blizzard to pick us up.

C: Velcro holding a refrigerator door closed.

D: Walking above the cars. Hearing the squeak of snow.

E: COWBOY backs into a snow plow. Gets out of the car. The snow plow is bigger than a two-story building.

COWBOY

Well, how else you want to get home?

LANIE (V.O.)

Got it.

EMILY (V.O.)

It could work. With music under.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

BIRDIE

Three words: No dramatic tension.

LUNA

This is it. All the elements. Gun. Art. Loose, but not so loose that the story falls apart. Um, and referential; it should be referential to something ...

BIRDIE

But something with more lasting value than *Mannix*.

LUNA

Right.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRISH MOORS — TWILIGHT

Late winter. The early spring adds a blush to the landscape.

JOE walks away from us. His long black robe flaps in the wind.

EXT. IRISH MOORS — TWILIGHT

Deep twilight. Joe sits in the middle of the dirt road and taps out a beat with two small twigs. He looks first to his right, then to his left.

CUT TO:

Sneakers walking in the road.

EXT. IRISH MOORS — EVENING

Early evening, Joe walks down the slope of the road. He's looking again around him. He sees:

GHOSTS wandering across the heather. A random SAMPLING of types. Like raiding a well-equipped costume department (COP, LION TAMER, SCHOOL TEACHER, COWBOY, DORA, PICASSO)

BLAZE (OFF)

I'm smelling Fellini.

DROOG

Or Squat Theater.

LIAM

Hasn't happened yet.

BLAZE

We're back in '75.

OSCAR

Ooh, I've had this dream. This is like the dream where you didn't study for the test.

SARAH

What about Pop Culture? *Mary Hartman*.

Not *Mary Hartman*, but you know.

EXT. BOAT HOUSE YARD — NIGHT

Through the window we can SEE the friends talking.

PULL BACK to REVEAL: Mounds of snow everywhere. Blue in the moonlight.

FADE OUT

Lee Eiferman was involved in many Hallwalls events and exhibitions in the 1970s. She now lives in Brooklyn and works as a commercial screenwriter.

ROBERT LONGO
Artful Dodger
[excerpt, 1976]

"nothing but winter and hard work" in this city, in this city I've learnt that he must work harder than the rest to become a popular hero.

- "even if he did have songs in his plays . . . what happens if you can't sing"

- "all heroes have to go underground at one time or another" said James of the first order of almaniacs projected through my forehead, to the sky of my confusion, I can't be afraid of the weight.

"the next night we tried to define the third world" whites on the roof.

I entertain the powers of night with headphones and a typewriter.

I take notes—he talks . . . hopefully I won't disappoint T.S. in his pre-dictations. . .

Excerpted from poster-sized publication accompanying the performance/installation Artful Dodger which premiered at Hallwalls in January 1976. Spelling and typography reproduced from original.

LEE EIFERMAN: The [Essex Street] gallery was very oddly segmented, which provided a lot of possibilities. For one performance/installation in March 1977, Cindy Sherman and I had two independent areas, one in the main room and another in an unused room on the second floor. Cindy had constructed a swing; she was swinging back and forth with this maniacal laugh, like a lunatic, like a Garden District belle, swinging and laughing. I rigged up a bunch of mirrors; half the people sat on one floor and the other half sat above them. The inspiration for the piece was the fact that Robert (Longo) was dyslexic. We had also learned that Einstein didn't talk when he was a kid, so we were exploring the theory that artistic genius was linked to these kinds of handicaps...

Excerpted from a 1995 phone interview with Ronald Ehmke.

ANTHONY BANNON
Excerpts from *Noise* catalogue text
[1976]

Onward and upward to Wallhalla.

... Fifteen figures fly from the cold. Five more will follow.

Think of heroes. With self-mocking grins. Think straight. And make it crooked. And the idea is iced.

It isn't necessary to understand.

... Yet as surely as Icarus, as certainly as the fierce venture and the fire, and as Daedalus, his father, built the labyrinth and who did fly, skillfully, and as in spite of better evidence, the mind organizes noise, as with these words. With these truths. And winds. And fires. Indeed.

It only has been since the winter of '74, late in the winter, when the ice was again cut. And thawed. And made to work. In new ways, according to the ideas. In new shapes. In this city on the lake with the wind and the growing fires. Put together now in the spring, the late spring of '76, when the fifteen fly and follow after others and nearly 100 others in the hall with walls, to hear the new noises, see its shapes, give it names, make it work.

The noise will yield. And present itself new and at the vanguard. And one of its names is art. In Hallwalls.

LYNN HIRSCHBERG, "The Four Brushmen of the Apocalypse," *Esquire*, March 1987: Longo, who is now 34, grew up on Long Island and was visually oriented from the start, perhaps because he was dyslexic and couldn't read. He watched TV endlessly and drew what he saw on television. He couldn't read a clock face or tie a knot, but he could draw a gladiator from *Spartacus* or a football player perfectly. "I was never living in reality," he says. "I was never there. I started realizing that the only way I could live in reality was by making reality. So I live in this. It would be perfect if on the TV was a film that I had made and on the stereo was music that I had made and on the wall was a painting I had made. I'd give anything to get into that place where I lived in a totally fabricated world."

Longo moved to New York City in 1976 at the age of 23. He had an agenda—to become a great and famous and rich artist, not necessarily in that order. It was a presumptuous and certainly ambitious mission, but it was hardly unique to Longo. Would-be artists were flocking to Manhattan in the mid-Seventies. Julian Schnabel and David Salle, among others, were just starting to get noticed, and the big ideas they flaunted were all the rage.

Longo had heard of Salle when he was in college in Buffalo: he would hear of Schnabel and Eric Fischl and still others soon after. He and three friends, one of whom was his girlfriend at the time, the artist Cindy Sherman, had founded an alternative art space in Buffalo called Hallwalls. It was a typical Longo enterprise: Hallwalls involved a group activity (Longo has a knack for leading groups), and it was a remarkably fearless undertaking for a college student. Longo would go on fact-finding missions to Manhattan, making friends with gallery owners, getting artists' phone numbers, and wooing them up to Hallwalls to lecture and show their work. "Robert was a great observer," says one dealer Longo cultivated during these trips. "I think they started Hallwalls purely so they could all live there and get public funding and invite every New York artist up to Buffalo to talk."

Hallwalls gave Longo an edge in his introduction to the New York art world—he became known not just as another aspiring artist but as an aspiring artist with a place to show others' work. Which isn't to say that Longo's motivations were somehow devious or unusually opportunistic: he was simply ambitious—both for Hallwalls and his work.

ALEXANDRA ANDERSON-SPIVY, "Who Is That Girl, Anyway?," *Esquire*, February 1991: The mid-Seventies was Soho's spring, an era of cheap rents and alternative spaces in which artists pursued their craft with little hope of making a profit. And in Buffalo, (Cindy) Sherman and her artist friends Robert Longo, Nancy Dwyer, and Charles Clough started Hallwalls, a now-famous space. In a former ice factory that divided into bedrooms, common living area, kitchen, and exhibition space, they staged performances and shows.

Martha Wilson, founder of Franklin Furnace, the artists' book archive and performance space, visited Hallwalls in the winter of 1977. "There was a gigantic blizzard, and we were snowed in for week," she recalls. "Cindy had set up her bedroom like a photo studio. We'd all be cooking, or watching *Roots*, or reading magazines. Cindy'd get an idea and dart off to her room. She'd disappear for about half an hour and take a picture. Then she'd come back and just hang out."

By the late Seventies, most of the Hallwalls founders, attracted by Soho's seductive energies, had migrated to New York City. Preceded by Robert Longo, her boyfriend at the time, Sherman arrived in 1977. From the moment she first showed her black-and-white portraits at the 1980 opening show of Metro Pictures, her career took off on a charmed trajectory enjoyed by a rare few—and even fewer women—in each artistic generation. Her success was not only instant, it was global.

... Most artists claim that they disavow their celebrity, but Sherman seems almost bashful about her early fame. "I've taken the attention for granted," she says. "But I felt guilty about being singled out. It seemed just too fast to deal with. I would have felt more comfortable if my friends could have moved in the same way. It's better now because everybody is showing and things have evened out."

PAUL GARDNER, *"Longo: Making Art for Brave Eyes," ARTnews, May 1985:* Hours before dawn. The black Saab purrs along the almost empty New Jersey Turnpike. Its driver, Robert Longo, has put the soundtrack from a favorite movie, *Taxi Driver*, on the tape deck. In his poor-artist days, just a few years ago, he drove a cab from midnight until dawn. Before climbing into the new Saab, an emblem of his success and his only luxury, Longo had been working for 10 hours in his studio-loft—"a kind of fallout shelter" in a dilapidated building on South Street, around the corner from Manhattan's Fulton Fish Market. Now he wants to calm down, to relax. He often winds along the East River Drive at dawn, by himself, reveling quietly in the stillness and isolation of the drowsing metropolis. He has clocked in about 2,000 miles, he guesses, driving alone in the small hours.

DAVID LIDA, *"La Longo Vita," Elle, October 1989:* Longo distinguished himself as part of an emerging group of artists who came to be called the Neo-Expressionists. They injected a vibrancy into the spartan art scene by employing more painterly, 19th-century values again, and by eschewing abstraction for figurative work.

With fame and recognition, *la vie bohème* gave way to *la dolce vita*. Some of this group became as well known for their personal excesses and bombastic remarks as for the five- and six-figure prices their works fetched. Longo, in particular, seemed to appear in newspapers and magazines on a weekly basis, announcing his forays into performance art, filmmaking, and rock-video directing; flitting in and out of the trendiest restaurants and nightclubs; sporting a haircut that one journalist described as "a mohawk gone berserk."

He claimed to watch four hours of TV soap opera daily while listening to blaring rock 'n' roll, and would frequently make outrageous remarks along the lines of "Hitler was, in a weird way, the greatest filmmaker who ever lived. He staged the Second World War," and "I basically created a religion—which is me—and I worship it every day."

"If you pretend to be someone long enough," you may end up being that person," says Longo today. "It's actually quite scary. There was a time when, if I was doing an interview, I'd be very conscious of what I was wearing, what music was on, what was on TV—totally concerned with how I could get into your skin."

CINDY SHERMAN: I think what a lot of us were doing at that time was going outside of the usual art world influences and taking things that were used in perhaps more commercial areas—like advertising or television or corporate logos or different kinds of visual things that were never considered on a level with art—and making art out of them. Some of that gets filtered back into the sources that we were stealing from, so eventually the cover of *Newsweek* has an image that looks exactly like a Barbara Kruger even though she never did it (although she did do other covers), eventually they steal back even though we were stealing from them in the first place.

Excerpted from a July 1993 interview with Anthony Bannon.

MICHAEL ZWACK: I think to a certain extent [the work of many of Hallwalls' founders] was all about myth and also demythifying at the same time, forcing people to stand back and for once in their life to say, "What does this painting mean?" as opposed to, "Oh, yeah, we know what that means." ... I don't think [anyone said], "Well, [the work] I'm going to make has to have [this political dimension] in it, or has to have this spiritualness in it." "Has to have": I don't think anybody really paid attention to that. I think the work just originated. I mean, Cindy's show, *Play of Selves*, was really just about her own identity and how she saw herself, and then she just expanded it out. And Robert, I think that's just what happened in his work a lot of the time. It's a lot about him, his personal fetishes, his ideas of power, his ideas of celebrity.

I don't understand what "the myth" is. Is the myth about what's in the art, or is the art the myth, or is the person who makes the art the myth? There's so many systems of mythology now, and the "mythic" can last two weeks. You can create and destroy a myth in two weeks.

Visual artist Michael Zwack played a key role in Hallwalls' early days. His comments here are excerpted from a September 1993 interview with Anthony Bannon.

CHARLES CLOUGH: Hallwalls is a tool for making culture. To establish its identity we invited people who were forming reputations on the developing edge of culture to present their works. This identification transferred to Hallwalls, which was thereby empowered to confer the significance of cultural agency to those whose work it presented.

Names become simple symbols for complex conglomerations of meaning. Hallwalls stands for the collective meanings of the people whose works it has presented. The reputations of the better-known become associated with the lesser-known and significance is established. The functioning of this process is mediated by the competition for the public's attention, which is as amorally brutal as natural selection. It remains to be seen whether the works presented by Hallwalls will enter the canon. Hallwalls serves as a communication channel for those who seek identity, culture, and self-realization.

Visual artist Charles Clough was one of the co-founders of Hallwalls. His comments here are culled from a January 1995 statement written for this publication.

DIANE BERTOLO: I have been hearing bits of Hallwalls "history" here and there. I've heard a lot about names and careers and very little about the things that mattered most back then, such as process, community, art: the very things that informed and shaped us as artists. The cult of the ancestors is only one of many stories. Here's another version of the Hallwalls myth:

I'm not sure how it came to pass that we all found each other (and a bit of our future) in an old ice factory in Buffalo. But together we gathered to inform and disarm each other. It was a time of support, challenge, and confrontation. In other words, this was a community. And with that community came a kind of mandate, a "permission slip," to continue your work with intensity...no matter what.

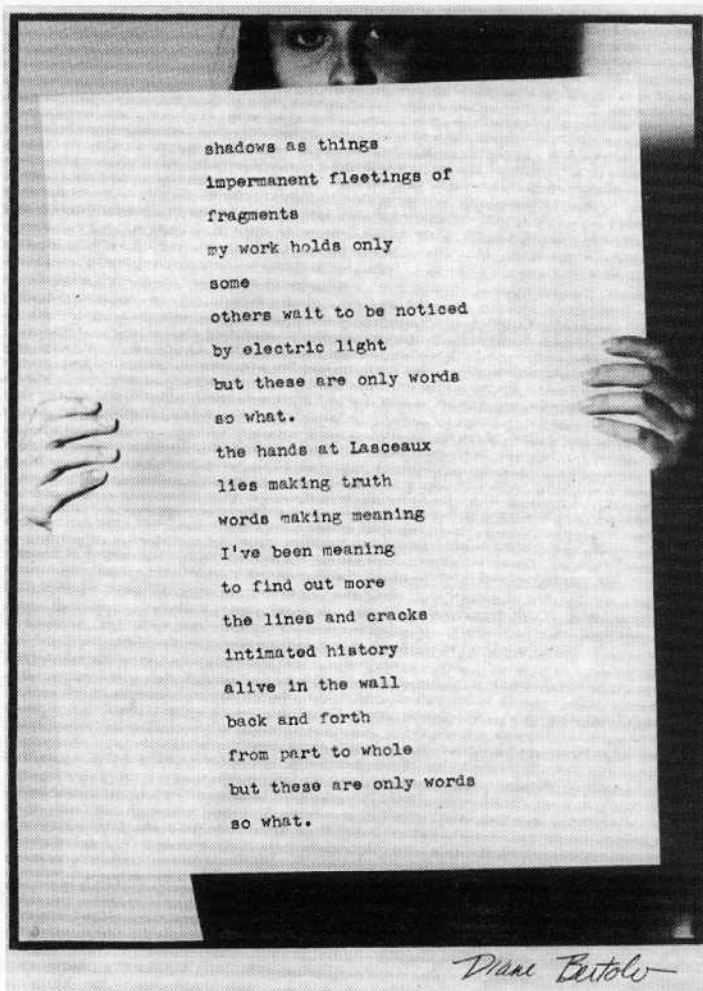
Maybe it was because Hallwalls began on the heels of Conceptual Art that there was an emphasis on process and exploration rather than product. Experimentation wasn't encouraged, it was assumed, and the means were always more important than the ends. This lesson, along with a steady influx of visiting artists, exhibitions, and performances, was our "school."

Art prevailed.

I recall a seemingly endless stream of words and images. I remember a group of people gathered in a hallway for spaghetti suppers. I remember curating shows, organizing visiting artists, writing grants, and picking up countless wine glasses after openings. I remember great ideas and half-baked ideas mixed with spackle and gallons of white paint.

I recall plenty of names, too. But it was the moment in time that I remember most: the support, experimentation, ideas and intensity: all that, and the enduring "permission slip" I received in 1974.

Visual and digital artist Diane Bertolo was the first formally-designated Exhibitions Curator of Hallwalls (1979-1980). Her comments here were written for this publication.



Diane Bertolo, gallery handout accompanying exhibition, circa 1976.

KEVIN FIX: I picked up this book called *Heroic Figure*, with an intro by Linda Cathcart: a catalogue to this show that traveled all over the world. Cindy Sherman, Ellen Carey, and Bob Longo looked so cool. I guess all their hard work paid off. Now and again I'll see them on the cover of some art mag. Quite frankly, I do regret I didn't push myself more to succeed.

I did see Longo at 700 Main Street for a Hallwalls benefit. I didn't have the guts to tell him I'm the geek who used to gawk at all the great goings-on at the gallery at Essex with Ken, Biff, Peggy Brady, Larry Lundy, and all the CEPA pals. I wanted to shoot the shit with him and find out what everybody's doing. But he probably doesn't remember me.

Hallwalls is a habit that's hard to shake. I'm hooked. I stay away for too long and I start to jones. I used to mainline modernism at Essex, push postmodernism at Main. Now it's a triple shot of that stuff at Tri-Main. I'm an obsessive consumer of culture.

Kevin Fix is a performance artist, filmmaker, and writer who has presented work at Hallwalls many times. His comments here are excerpted from a statement written for this publication.

STEVE GALLAGHER: [Among staff members in the mid-'80s] there was a lot of anxiety about Longo and what we had inherited. Over time people came to see Hallwalls as a new kind of space, with a new identity. There was always a kind of anxiety about the past; it was a matter of forging new relationships, forging a career as a curator, "accumulating an identity" [laughs]. Establishing a relationship over time, both with artists and other curators and other spaces, with funders: that all helped to change the profile of Hallwalls—to enlarge it greatly, I think! We did much, much more ambitious things than Longo and those guys ever tried to do, reached many, many more people—Hallwalls is probably reaching huge numbers of people now, compared to what the original group reached.

Steve Gallagher programmed performance at Hallwalls from 1984 to 1986 and film from 1984 to 1989. His comments here are excerpted from a December 1994 interview with Ronald Ehmke.

JULIE ZANDO: I have always imagined that I would like to write a sitcom based on my political experience in feminist and gay movements. The story would take place in a print shop, and the humor would generate from the juxtaposition of aging hippies and Old Left radicals with 90's-style punk activists. But translating a not-for-profit art space into television would be a very different thing. I picture Hallwalls more appropriately as a hospital drama, with gentle but stressed characters gulping coffee in a space humming with activity. Hallwalls-as-story has human interest, a sense of purpose, and the occasional crisis, usually over a deadline, or perhaps when too much coffee has been consumed for one's own well-being. Hallwalls is better (art) than television, with more compelling issues and more engaging characters. But like a serial television viewer, my experience there was as a devoted follower—not in the passive sense, but in the sense of being a participant in the very telling of the story, a Derridean viewer, in active engagement with the unfolding drama. The openness, generosity, and respect which allowed for that participation is what I remember about Hallwalls.

And that is where the analogy to a television series ends, for Hallwalls is not a rigid transmitter of culture, but a living space, an organism which grows and changes. The organization always included the right mix of personal vision and community engagement, and the space breathed with energy, ideas, and inspiration. And it grew—when it was in its second space, on 700 Main Street, I was surprised to hear that Hallwalls had had another life, with a different cast of characters, on Essex Street where it was founded. I guess I was part of what one might call the "second generation" of audiences at Hallwalls, and there now promises to be a "third generation" in its new space.

Unlike a television series, which is often weakened by the inevitable spin-offs which sap its original vitality, Hallwalls has been strengthened by its role as progenitor to a wide variety of collective activity. They have supported and encouraged community groups like ACT UP/Buffalo and the performance group Ladies of the Lake, many of whom used the Vault as a meeting area. I fondly remember when a group of media artists, all Hallwalls members, got together in 1986 to write NYSCA grants for the nascent organization Squeaky Wheel. Bill Currie, then Hallwalls director, graciously allowed us to use the

gallery space as our meeting room. We were a boisterous group, and I will never forget how supportive Bill was to us during what must have been a stressful time for his organization—in which he was trying to meet the same deadline. But that is just one story, one episode if you will, in the life of the organization. I have been deeply influenced by my experiences there, and despite the fact that I now live in Chicago, I will always stay “tuned” to the ongoing drama that is Hallwalls.

Media artist Julie Zando screened many of her early works at Hallwalls and was one of the first staff coordinators of the organization's video editing suite from 1986-87. She later became the first director of Squeaky Wheel/Buffalo Media Resources. Her comments here were written for this publication.

KAT JURATI AND ALAN VAN EVERY: It's an honor to be part of the history of Hallwalls, and to realize that Hallwalls is a part of our own history. 30F Essex, the original Hallwalls, was our home and art studio throughout our career as artists in Buffalo. ... We felt that Western New York artists needed a direct outlet for their work, and with the inspiration of Hallwalls' original founders, Cindy Sherman and Robert Longo, we opened an artist-run alternative gallery. We reviewed the Burchfield-Penney archives of Hallwalls material, and felt that again artists were choosing to control their own destiny; hence the name Big Orbit Gallery.

We followed the model of monthly artist meetings and gallery events. Big Orbit was founded during the Gulf Crisis, in March 1991, and as state funding was not readily available, we sought local support from artists and businesses. ... Again following Longo and Sherman's lead, we moved to Manhattan in December 1993, starting a live/work space called Deep Space at 99 Bowery.

Excerpted from a statement written for this publication by visual artists Kat Jurati and Alan Van Every.



Study for *Noise* poster, 1976. (See Anthony Bannon, p. 224.)

FRITZ BACHER

From Corpus Video [1995]

let the Shit begin to speak—haven't enough fucking soldiers already died in this poem? why go forward? don't we all have enough flesh-eating disorders at our mouths? o let the Shit begin to think—with great realism all through the Sunday sections! on the fly paper that shades the author at five o'clock (he's the only badly shaved author left alive at this point in the poem—but we'll soon take care of that!) on the author's blotched skin from his predictable hangover from his typical social resentments (we'll fix him—you decide how you want to finish the fucker off / for doomed romance with Ivy league princess, press 1 now; for drug/alcohol errors in judgment, press 2; for Bloomsbury-bashing at state fair, press 3...) ... let his Drool begin to cast heroes for the new crusades (at the Hotel Bankrupt, infirmed by infomercials, the birthplace of bowels) o let his Drool begin to tick For the hour of the apparitions has begun (at the frozen hour) of the evening glass as curates descend Suddenly a wild gesture of an ancient Ehmke(e) (from the prophetic tribe with the tiny record players who invaded the lower east side in the 1980's, according to a *Popular Mechanics* that Sweat found last night in a pool of Bile) o let his Drool begin to thank our king of Bohemia and Lord Dropper of Names at last. (Ehmke(e) will become the 21st Century Tristram Shandy if he makes the correct e-mail mistake, 18th Century scholar in Indiana predicts) waiting for sulfur trams to take us away on the heels of Dr. Strange (another knock) lo, Our lady of Video in her many forms/ infermental babe, mystic rewind of queens, u-matic sage of light, keeper of the b-roll as I quake, redeemer of the brutal refute against us, lamp-lighter from Laphroig, madam of the 8mm salon where our madness is stored, magnetic womb of night, sustainer of bliss, jade finger on the time base correction of dms; don't worry because it wasn't you, rules Judge Ito ... let his Blood begin to dream where Buffalo came and where we invented television (no one else would) under the surveillance of Wilson Farms, in the cheap six-pack hour of video youth while Reagan reigned (as Lady Lafond adjusted your tie, says

Remember) o let his Blood begin to laugh the torn saga left from the murderous Queen of Tebes (seems like only a Cardoni ago were we slaughtered) down the studio of streets with no money feet running to the foot of Ferry (where everybody necked) XTC stones tossed for Niagara as she rose and as she falls, drown ye slaves of vision (at Flynn's, off Elizabeth and Allen Streets, where the Canadian expatriates await their judgment with thousand dollar bar tabs) where Mad Henry of Welland still holds court (my dearly departed liege of Shit) where Tesla took a stool Where Brian of Springer of Skye opened his genius of a jar and fed the world (and sometimes me) with microwave feed Where Cheryl the Spoker of Wheels administers the access of blight, where Lizzie of Finnegan brought her wake of light to Trico windshield wiper factory, where Mad Kaiser Wicka bought video futures with the leftover interest of our lives, where Annie of Fergus fought entire generations of language poets with her bare hands (and won) where Mentlik of Ages (dear colleague of Bile) launched vile attacks against Toronto video artists (sluts of the smug machine) and where the dark Princess of Pixel Vision briefly danced, sadly, the night seemed to be done and the darkness was about to go from our land, then lo, Julia the Younger comes to prolong our apocalypse (she's the Joan of Arc of the new video fringe, says *Vanity Fair*) And we thought it was just because Paris never happened in the fridge (but we are beyond Paris) and we thought it was just because the Bills never won the Super Bowl (Buffalo Bills win Super Bowl, says a relieved Jesus Christ) and we thought it was just because,

the snow never stopped above
But his Blood did dream
corpus video, my love

Fritz Bacher is an independent media artist, writer, and performer whose work has been presented at Hallwalls many times. His contribution here is excerpted from a longer performance text written for this publication.

RETHINKING THE HISTORY, MISSION, & DESTINY OF ALTERNATIVE SPACES

A more precise analogy can be made with baseball: alternative spaces are the art world's farm clubs; established galleries are the big leagues that are turning to the alternative spaces for fresh talent. But in cities like Buffalo (where there is a fine museum, the Albright-Knox, but what else?) a place like Hallwalls doesn't fit any model. It grew unceremoniously through legwork and elbow grease. It was a place where eager, like-minded artists could meet, exchange ideas and show their work. It was no big deal and it was a very big deal. As Mao said, the longest journey starts with the first step.

I was sitting last night with someone who is a lawyer who is like, an art lawyer, and another person and I was all

```
CLS
DIM I V$(9,5)
DIM 251 M$(3,900)
G$=FILES$(1,"TEXT",.V%)
W%=V%
OPEN"1",#1,G$,.V%
INPUT#1,NINFECTION
INPUT #1,NCOL
INPUT #1,NLIGN
FOR I=1 TO 4
  FOR J=1 TO 8
    INPUT#1,X%
    V$(I,J)=CHR$(X)
  NEXT J
NEXT I
CLOSE#1
F$=FILES$(1,"TEXT",.V%)
H$=LEFT$(F$,LEN(F$)-2)
FOR K=1 TO 3
  IF K=1 THEN F$=H$+",".R"
  IF K=2 THEN F$=H$+",".V"
  IF K=3 THEN F$=H$+",".B"
  OPEN"1",#1,F$,.W%
  LONG IF NCOL<=250
    FOR I=1 TO NLIGN
      READ#1,M$(1,I);NCOL
    NEXT I
  ELSE
    FOR I=1 TO NLIGN
      READ#1,M$(1,I);250
      READ#1,M$(2,I);NCOL-250
    NEXT I
  END IF
  CLOSE#1
  RANDOM
  FOR L=1 TO NINFECTION
    VERTICAL=INT(RND(NCOL))
    HORIZONTAL=INT(RND(250))
    U=0
    FOR J= VERTICAL TO VERTICAL+3
      U=U+1
      V=0
      FOR I= HORIZONTAL TO HORIZONTAL+7
        V=V+1
        LONG IF NCOL<=250
          DEBUTS=LEFT$(M$(1,VERTICAL),LEN(M$(1,VERTICAL))-
            FIN$=RIGHT$(M$(1,VERTICAL),LEN(M$(1,VERTICAL))-
              HORIZONTAL)
            M$(1,VERTICAL)=DEBUTS+V$(V,U)+FIN$
          ELSE
            DEBUTS=LEFT$(M$(2,VERTICAL),LEN(M$(2,VERTICAL)-
```

stuff: "It's a business, and it should be treated as a business." And I thought, well, this is all good, but then I started to think about baseball and rookie contracts and free agents, and I thought, does this mean more people will be held out?

It's funny when I think about how people enter the art world. I just went to this place and made my work and continue to make my work, and there seem to be people who want to see it and want me to do things with it ... We were a bunch of people who were making art and goofing around, and 20 years later it's still there. Charlie [Clough] and Robert [Longo] are part of the people I still see, some less, some more. We discuss each other through other people. We're so much a part of each other's history. A lot of things have happened to all of us since then. Artists Space is not like Artists Space was then; the Kitchen isn't like it was.

Michael Zwack was a member of the first generation of artists to present work at Hallwalls. His comments here are excerpted from a 1995 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

CHARLES A. WRIGHT, JR. (*Exhibitions Curator, 1989-91*): I think I came to Hallwalls with a notion that it had this very long historical relationship to contemporary art-making. That, like P.S. 1, like Artists Space, it has grown into being an institution, was known as that. Living in New York, watching P.S. 1 become a museum—because I had interned at all these places—watching the repercussions of a show like *Arte Povera* on an institution that saw itself originally as something for artists, I came to Hallwalls with the notion that this is no longer an organization, it is an institution, and how do I work with that? The Albright is a wonderful collection but it's not exactly a bevy of "cutting-edge" thought, dare I use the notion. I was interested in doing programming that was "museum-quality" (I'm not really sure what that means), but to do things that seemed to be relevant to the broader field, to sort of question means and modes of presentation. *FluxAttitudes* is probably the most explicit example of that. I was never so frightened for my career as the day *FluxAttitudes* opened. We broke a lot of rules that night that should never be broken in an institution, especially when there's a loan form.

Excerpted from a 1995 interview with Elizabeth Licata. For more information on FluxAttitudes, see Elizabeth Licata's essay and the "Exhibitions" chapter of this volume.

MATTHEW SCHWONKE (*Film Curator, 1994-95*): The generational changes in the 1960s—which inspired organizations like Hallwalls in the first place—have completely transformed the idea of youth culture ever since. Over the last few years, the existence of things like MTV and magazines like *Details* and *Sassy* have radically changed the meaning of "alternative" culture. "Alternative spaces" haven't really kept up with any of that. People my age (in their 20s) don't really go to places like Hallwalls or CEPA any more; I didn't really feel that comfortable at them myself until I started working at them. I think many of the people who founded these organizations—as well as the artists they showed—were in their 20s in the 1970s, they were in their 30s during the 1980s, and now they're in their 40s. The whole idea that John Maggiotto was 23 when he became director of Hallwalls (in the late 70s): that would almost be unthinkable now. Audiences are growing, but I don't get the feeling that people who come to these places now feel engaged by them, that Hallwalls or CEPA represent a scene they want to be part of, or that they want to make their own work to show at them.

Meanwhile, younger people are finding their own spaces: when you go to Topic Café or Stimulance [two Buffalo coffee-houses], you find crowds of people, and there's a great deal of discussion of contemporary culture. This is where it's happening. People are putting out their own 'zines, putting their paintings and photos on the walls, they're showing their films and videos at these new spaces. I'm not sure if what they're doing is really "alternative" anymore, or just seems alternative. But they're wary of Hallwalls and CEPA, and it raises real questions about what role these organizations, which are now perceived as established institutions, should play. If a "contemporary arts center" is going to stay contemporary or truly function as an alternative, it has to constantly re-invent itself.

Excerpted from an interview with Ronald Ehmke, March 1995.

ALAN SONDHEIM (*Artistic Director, 1987-88*): Hallwalls has grown significantly since its origins; like many other spaces of its kind, it has changed its name to "Contemporary Arts Center" (CAC in New Orleans and Nexus in Atlanta come to mind). Nevertheless, I believe it should continually work on the ability to present alternatives to the regular gallery system (i.e., commercial, profit-making system). This not only includes radical or "fringe" art, but also outsider art, art with minority aesthetics, populist arts, and so forth. ... From the viewpoint of postmodernism itself (I am thinking of Lyotard here), there are no "grand narratives" any longer; there are disjunctions and equivalences, fragments and micropoliticizations at best. I believe that Hallwalls, from this angle, should represent all viewpoints for discussion; in this manner, community outreach and alternative artspace or contemporary arts center come together. There is no reason why a double commitment to artworld aesthetics and other viewpoints cannot be made simultaneously. This is not a position of ambivalence; it is a position of discourse—considering Hallwalls as a discursivity, a place for the discussion and communication of artworks, forms, and aesthetics.

Excerpted from a memo to the staff, circa 1988.

ISAAC JULIEN (*filmmaker, founding member of Sankofa Film/Video Collective*): ... As far as I'm concerned the avant-garde is dead. *Territories* [1985] and *Passion of Remembrance* [1986] are not about the things that were going on in the white avant-garde. We're not interested in just breaking rules and conventions. Which is not to say that there isn't a cultural and political world that informs the white avant-garde of the '70s, because there is. But I think that it's too easy to reduce cultural endeavor to a formal exercise.

... One of the phenomena you can trace in the diaspora is that Black subjects are never really in the visual plane. We want to explore what happens to Black subjectivity when it sees white images. We know that 40% of American film audiences are Black, and they see many kinds of films. There don't have to be Black images all the time, but then we know from the psychoanalytical work done on Black subjectivity that in our psyches there is a massive dilemma taking place. It affects you in every moment as a Black person. You don't see yourself.

... The crisis around race is not just a theoretical one, it's a crisis at all levels. It's very obvious what informs it in the age of Reaganism and Thatcherism. When you walk in New York streets and you see the number of Black people on the streets begging, something tells you that there is something wrong about the system. If you go to the Dia Art Foundation for a lecture on issues relating to colonialism and there are no Black people in that room, but there's one Black person giving the lecture, you think to yourself, well there's something wrong. In London this hasn't happened as much. I was really surprised by the cultural apartheid in New York. Issues such as Nicaragua, first world involvement in the third world, and the invasion of Grenada: these are questions that we cannot not talk about. And these are key sites of representation. And this is precisely what is being signaled when people like Jean Baudrillard talk about the end. It's about certain kinds of worlds coming to an end. We can see that one of the biggest problems in the discourse of postmodernism is that it doesn't talk about the Black subject. Nor does it address colonial discourse.

MARTINA ATTILLE (*filmmaker, founding member of Sankofa*): ... If anything, Black representation must confront modernity, and question whether our understanding of modernity embraces Black experiences. Black people's experience of capitalism hasn't really been dealt with enough. For us to leap to the postmodern would be to overlook the unfinished business of modernity: the way that Black people have traveled, in search of resources, in search of better lives; how they shaped new societies, new cultures, new vocabularies, and new accents within the modern world. There are great gaps in documenting that experience from a Black perspective.

We must be sure that when we talk about race, the white subject doesn't slip out the back door, and leave the Blacks to sort this out among themselves. It's as if whiteness doesn't find a place within the discourse around race until you actually get white subjectivity to declare its interest, to actually explore its colonialist past, its fascination and its fetishes. ... Unless you get people to discuss race in terms of what is invested in Blackness, and what is invested in whiteness, what is denied by both, then you're always going to get the subject of race being the subject of Blackness.

Excerpted from Coco Fusco, "An Interview with Martina Attille and Isaac Julien of Sankofa" in Young, British & Black: The Work of Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collective, edited by Coco Fusco, published by Hallwalls in 1988.

VANESSA JONES (*performance artist*): The '80s have shown that under increasing global conservatism, the artists and art spaces have been forced into economic black holes of necessity, consumer-conscious corners, regionalisms of many kinds, and other assorted professional ruts in the name of preservation. Galleries are pushed into overwhelming financial and administrative gambling—workers spend higher percentages of their time writing grants than they do distributing the benefits of them. Everyone relentlessly moves toward gloss and hype—as a means, possibly, to connect their art to more mainstream culture, to pull themselves out of cultural marginality.

... As a younger and independent artist, I face the '90s committed to confront these issues of context. Performance is not just a novelty act, nor is it always best shown in frantic, overly saturated festivals. It is essential to maintain a diversity of presentation, a flexibility of context, an alternative to frigid bureaucratic circuits and the power of economic effects. What is important is that artists continue to expose, explore, and risk other working methods, to bridge product and process, to make conscious that struggle if art is to assert its potential to re-shape values and perceptions.

British artist Vanessa Jones traveled across the United States and Canada in 1989 and 1990 creating site-specific performances and installations at alternative spaces, including "This Land is Your Land" at the former site of a Trico windshield-wiper factory in Buffalo (which later became Hallwalls' third home). Her comments here are excerpted from an October 1989 statement accompanying her Hallwalls proposal.

HOMER JACKSON (*performance/installation artist, radio producer, independent curator, educator*): An alternative space is an alternative to silence. It's important that spaces like Hallwalls exist for the very purpose of providing a voice for people outside New York City and Los Angeles. Hallwalls is a first link in the chain for New York artists to get their work seen outside that setting, so they can become truly national in scope; on the other hand, such spaces are also open to oddballs like me, who function outside New York City. Part of the thing about being outside New York is that it brings some truth back to the notion of alternative spaces. When you look around the country at art spaces today, you can almost guess what's gonna be there, who's gonna be there; the farther away from New York you go, the more predictable these artists and exhibitions are. It's still a New York head (or a California head, depending on where you go).

My first experience at Hallwalls was being on a [National Endowment for the Arts/Rockefeller Foundation] New Forms panel. The whole idea of the grant was to break the chain of control of New York curators/artists/institutions over what was going on. These people usually aren't from New York originally—they're running away from somewhere else, and they don't want to acknowledge that there's work there. To say that there is interesting work coming out of Cleveland or Austin or Santa Fe or Atlanta or Pittsburgh flies in the face of their need to have escaped those [cities] in the first place. Sure, some people have gone on to New York, but other people went on to Minneapolis, or Portland, or Ohio. These people aren't necessarily reflected in museums or art history, but they've played a key role in their communities. Take the 8mm video movement: that owes a huge debt to Buffalo.

In a related vein, the "multicultural" approach to programming has provided a visible means of exposing the racism and classism in the arts. Only certain kinds of black art and black artists are getting shown. It's easy for white people to understand black people's anger—they've seen it, it's 20 years old—but they can't understand black intimacy. There's worlds of blackness that black people haven't explored. Forget museums, that's out. But 90 percent of the curators [at alternative spaces] are white—and then you get to black institutions and they don't even want to raise these issues in their own spaces. So you're in the middle of nowhere. There's an acceptable kind of blackness that people can deal with, and then there's all that other shit. There's the gun-toting black man, the gay black man, the ethereal earth-mother/mother-mother. Isn't anybody else making black art besides dead Southern folk artists and sunglasses-wearing suburban Ivy-League-educated walking dead?

Homer Jackson's most recent connection to Hallwalls was the installation he created for the organization's 20th anniversary season and a corresponding performance. His comments here are excerpted from a 1995 conversation with Ronald Ehmke.

DANIEL LEVINE (*visual artist*): Hallwalls gave you what you gave them. That doesn't exist anymore. I don't know anybody who goes to the Kitchen or Artists Space. I'm not involved in that sense of community anymore. Maybe I've seen it all, or something like that. Economically, it's miserable in New York now, but people are still plugging away. I just go out to see things once in a while; I could go months without seeing shows. I made my living as an artist for about three years, but now I'm not. I don't know too many other people who are. I do paralegal work; it's a nice formal exercise. I've never had a job in the arts (since leaving) CEPA, but that was by choice. All the relationships [I made in Buffalo 15 years ago] have continued. It was a real important time on all sorts of levels. The great thing about it was that you didn't have to wait until you came to New York to be an artist. It didn't feel regional.

Daniel Levine has exhibited work at Hallwalls many times over the last 15 years; after leaving Buffalo for New York he returned to guest-curate the exhibition Amerikarma in 1989. His comments here are excerpted from a 1995 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

CHUCK AGRO (*visual artist*): Hallwalls was always an island to me, a community that had a few civil wars and internal conflicts, but always stood together to fight the common dragon. For the last 5 years I have worked with a handful of commercial galleries [in New York City]; here, the dragons still exist, but you learn to live with them, and in some cases you befriend them.

Cultural amnesia can and will destroy us. During the 20th anniversary year of one of the most important publicly funded alternative spaces in the United States, I beg each and every person who has been affiliated with, shown at, received funding through, bought work from, been entertained by, or been encouraged by Hallwalls to write your Congressman and Senator to save the NEA. Not only to save important institutions like Hallwalls, but for our country's dignity as well.

Chuck Agro presented work at Hallwalls many times during his years in Buffalo. He wrote the statement above in December 1994 for this publication.

DAVID BENDERS (*Program Director, WBFO*): Many people have the feeling/impression that the "salad days" of creativity are lost in Buffalo. Our energies are divided, and we get into a terrible blaming of other cultural/educational institutions whom we try to say are at fault: the BPO isn't under progressive leadership, UB shouldn't have moved to Amherst, WBFO will never re-capture the creativity of Terry Gross and John Hunt, the Albright isn't doing what it should, and on and on. Needless to say, I believe by looking carefully through the history we could see that the roots of creativity in the city are very broad, not invested in certain individuals or institutions, and then put an end to some of this finger-pointing. Indeed, use the occasion of 20 years of Hallwalls as a rebirth into Buffalo's 21st-century creative arts. Only out of bonding together in a creative, supportive community can we return to that former level of output.

Excerpted from an e-mail exchange to Ronald Ehmke, May 1995.

CHARLOTTA KOTIK (*Curator of Contemporary Art, The Brooklyn Museum*): The problem with the '80s and '90s [is that] now we are without money, we're just writing grants and looking for money. I'm trying to work with more Brooklyn artists, a project I started in the '80s. ... Whenever I want information, I do try to go to artists spaces, including those here in Brooklyn. But I think the art market became so very strong in the '80s that artists spaces not based on the exchange of goods became pushed away. The tide might be turning again, because artists are looking more and more for possibilities to exhibit, and you know the means are diminishing for the purchase of art, and artists spaces will again play an important role. Artists are beginning again to form groups—the independent artists organizations—which are doing more and more things which are important. Now it seems to me again that they will be a source of disseminating information and ways for artists to show.

Charlotta Kotik was extremely supportive of Hallwalls in its early years, when she was Associate Curator at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Her comments here are excerpted from a 1994 interview with Elizabeth Licata.

PATRICK O'CONNELL

Excerpts from "The Artist Living with AIDS"

Panel Discussion at the 10th National Conference of the National Association of Artists Organizations, October 14, 1995

19 years ago, I walked into Artists Space, and [Director] Susan Wyatt saw me in my little Italian suit and thought she had a hot number walking in. We were above [the] Paula Cooper [Gallery]. Since that time, I've had the privilege to work in a number of spaces, including Hallwalls, ... around the country. I've had the most enjoyable, ride on this journey that I could ever possibly have. I've met people who were committed: to artists, to changing the way art was presented and looked at.

We tend to forget that there was a time before ... this network of artists' organizations [existed]. We have insured that the voice of artists was also [heard] at the table, that we were able to run our own spaces. We weren't relying on the handouts of a system that treats artists as infants.

... We waited 15 years to come to this wonderful city [San Francisco, for the NAAO Conference]. And there are ghosts walking with us here. ... I've been living with HIV myself for 11 years, and, yes, I took a wild wing this year. But there are people who didn't last as long as this. I feel

like they're sitting here in some of these empty chairs, and that the chairs aren't empty. ... Sometimes I'm asked, Would I do it again? I would do it again and again and again. I don't think anybody else gets as much reward out of what they're doing as what you've been able to provide me. You took me from being a presenter ... through Visual AIDS, addressing another important issue. You've been bravely confronting First Amendment problems. ... You opened the door for me when I walked into the second floor at 155 Wooster Street and kept opening those doors and windows for 19 years, 20 years. ... You taught me, and the world, new ways to see and new ways to dream. So I want to applaud you and thank you.

Patrick O'Connell left Artists Space to serve as Director of Hallwalls in the late 1970s, and later became the first Executive Director of Visual AIDS. His comments here are excerpted from a panel discussion he moderated, published in the Winter 1995/96 NAAO Bulletin.

BILL BESECKER

Excerpts from "The End of Music," 1989

(With acknowledgments to Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" argument:)

A depressing notion fostered by the retrospective logic of the 1980s is that music has no future. All that is heralded as new is only a rehash of what has come before, some would have us believe; there is nowhere else to go. We are told that harmony and theory have been exhausted by the intense complexity of the jazz form known as be-bop. The modal musical theories that followed were less complex, and in fact the beginnings of a backward evolution. Other attempts to create new forms (such as the avant-garde) have become too abstract to be taken seriously, and, in some cases, shouldn't be called music at all.

However, saxophonist Henry Threadgill questioned that logic in a 1985 interview. "A lot of people don't believe in evolution and change. They deny the existence and creativity of their own children. When they say that things stop right here, that there is no more hip music past this person, they are saying that their kids are imbeciles, and their grandchildren are even bigger imbeciles." ... The real hope for evolu-

tion seems to lie where it always has: in improvisation.

Some musicians can strip away the theme of any musical work, discard the arrangement and then improvise from the structure of the work to create new music. Others abandon harmonic structure itself and spontaneously create new music from merely an idea. This is called free improvisation.

... Jazz is truly an art, the 20th century's classical music. And art is not something that can remain only with its creator. It becomes alive in whatever kindred spirit sets it afire. It is itself, living, breathing and growing with whatever it is fed. When art no longer pleases and stimulates the brain, when it no longer inspires new ways of visualizing [concepts which cannot be expressed] through language, and when we no longer include works like Louis Armstrong's "Melancholy Blues" aboard unmanned cruises like Voyager 2 to define humanity to the cosmos: only then will we see the end of music.

Adapted and excerpted from writer and WBFO d.j. Bill Besecker's program notes for Free Fall: A Series of Musical Improvisations, September 23-November 2, 1989.

I DREAM OF HALLWALLS

From its inception, when the gallery was essentially an extension of the living space at 30 Essex Street, Hallwalls has found ways to infiltrate the subconscious minds of its staff and audiences. Many an employee, editing suite user, and visiting artist has camped out overnight; indeed, the entire Border Art Workshop ensemble moved into the gallery and Vault for the better part of their 1991 residency. In the process, deprived of REM sleep, the boundaries between one's art and one's life tend to grow a bit slippery. (For that matter, some might argue that creativity is always intimately linked to the dream state, that the people who shape the direction of an organization like Hallwalls are committed to envisioning alternative realities.) Here, with a tip of the nightcap to 1994-95 video curator Julia Dzwonkoski, is a sample of two decades' worth of night-time escapades.

R.I.P. HAYMAN

Saturday, June 12, 1976

11:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Richard Hayman presents "Music for Sleeping Audience" during a 2-day SEM Ensemble Festival. "The audience is requested to bring their own bedding (e.g. sleeping bags, mats, etc.)."

MIRIAM STILLERMAN

"I slept here at Hallwalls last night. Strange dream about being in charge of mutant children, and the tools that were used to control them. I was a trainee."

Excerpted from a manuscript the artist typed 8 hours a day while living in the gallery during a summer 1981 residency.



Publicity photo for Public Domain performance, 1985.

PAUL DICKINSON PRECOGNITIVE ANXIETY

- 1) Performance with three people standing on chairs, in pools of light. Sounds of pigs in cornfield or something. Anxiety over my ability to execute sound and lighting cues. I make a mistake in rehearsal. One of the performers talks me back to the previous cue. (July 1988, shortly after joining HW staff & about 4 months before presenting *Portrait of Iowa* by Alice B. Theater).
- 2) I was late for a performance. Car trouble, or something. I had been out with another visiting artist & felt guilty leaving the show to Ron & Maria. Showed up about 10 minutes before the performance; a scaffold was part of the set. (August 1989, 3 months before *Rabbit Plantation*—I had gone to dinner with Rob Danielson & Terese Agnew; their rental van died out in Williamsville & we had to catch a cab into town).
- 3) I thought that the video viewing room was kind of a strange place to have a performance, it being so small. It was kind of cozy, though. Naked bodies everywhere. I was naked. A woman with a shaved head was writhing on top of me. Two fears surfaced:
 - a. People I know are watching; what if I get a boner?
 - b. What about diseases, specifically AIDS? (September 1989, 9 months before Frank Moore's *Journey to Lila*.)

Media artist Paul Dickinson was Hallwalls' Technical director from 1988-90.

BARBARA LATTANZI
ARTISTS, PRISONERS, ELDERLY, SICK
 (July 1990)

i am with a group of people—some known, some strangers. The place is large, institutional, with the feel of a train station, drab and gray. It turns out to be a prison. Artists from Buffalo are there participating in an event related to an exhibition of their work. I know some of them. The prison also turns out to be a “home for the elderly.” Many of the seniors are sitting in wheelchairs. My father is even there, in a wheelchair, because of his cancer. So the inhabitants of this institution are: prisoners, the elderly, sick people, artists.

Two things happen in this dream. First, “A” is trying to find out where the art event is occurring in the building. To ask his question, “A” presses his mouth tight against my ear. (This is a peculiar “inscribing” of the sound of his voice onto my ear, as if ears were meant to read lips ... as if the ear is essentially deaf.) Then the artist “B” leaves the institution to go back to his family. But he never makes it. Instead he phones the prison/hospital/home for the elderly/art gallery to say in a shaking voice that he was busted on the way home for possession of marijuana. As a result he would be returning to the institution, to serve time.

Media artist Barbara Lattanzi was Hallwalls' Film Curator from 1981-83, Technical Director from 1983-87, and Video Co-Curator from 1987-91.

CHARLES A. WRIGHT, JR.

I used to sleep in the gallery. I had a little cot in the back [of the gallery]; I would come to work at 10 and work for a while and then go to dinner. I was alone in Buffalo, especially the first year. I would work until 1, 2 in the morning, then I would go have a drink, then come back. When *A Question of Paint* opened I had been in the gallery for four days straight and I hadn't left.

Charles A. Wright, Jr. was Exhibitions Curator from 1989-91. His comments here are excerpted from an interview with Elizabeth Licata.

ALEX GELENCSE

The performance artist makes everyone in the audience a performance artist, then tells everyone to go to the nearest wall. The walls turn into four different worlds and everyone goes into the world they want. They all get on bicycles and ride out together. If they had a wheelchair, they would get a special motorized one with wheels that could go anywhere.

Everyone would ride into their worlds and then all of a sudden they would be floating in chicken soup in these inner tube rings and the soup would have ring-shaped noodles in it.

Only the chicken soup thing didn't happen. I changed that part. Instead, they all changed into guys. Then they all changed into girls. Everyone all at once turned into guys again. Then they all turned into girls. They turned into guys again and they all spat together. When they changed into girls again, they all peed on the ground together.

Then everyone turned into ice cream and melted. For every person that was standing there was a carrot lying on the ground in a huge puddle of melted ice cream. The rain came and washed it away and a goat came and ate all the carrots.

Alex Gelencser served as House Manager from 1989-91.

SARA KELLNER
(September 1991)

i walked out into the main gallery at 700 Main with Ed [Cardoni]. He opened a trap door in the middle of the floor, and we went down some steps into a very large room filled with folding chairs—hundreds of folding chairs, all over the place. Ed reached into a cabinet and poured me a tangerine-colored drink in a tiny glass.

Visual artist Sara Kellner has served as Exhibitions Curator from 1991 to the present.

DAN RIGNEY
(December 1994)

It's a dark and cloudy nor'easter night on Narragansett Bay. There's a house there I go to every year at Bonnet Shores—the one place that never moves in my life. On the tiny beach at the end of the street there's a six foot mountain of conglomerate stone. I'm alone, standing on the rock fighting the wind and struggling to keep my balance. The wind is screaming in my ears, but I'm having no trouble standing. Then I start to move. The rock is now a platform—surfboard, really—and I'm headed out across the bay about 25 feet above the sandpaper surface of the water. The sky above matches the water below. It starts to rain—hard. The drops hit the surface of the water, turning it into television screen snow. It sounds like hissing, then distorts to a fuzzy dial tone. For a short while, I think I can make out the shape of NEA application forms in the white foamy peaks. Off to my right and left, I can see seagulls riding the gusts. Their beaks open and close, but their calls get blown behind me. All of a sudden, with a sound like two freight trains cuddling together in the dark, the sky starts to open up in front of me. A great booming voice too loud to be understood crashes into my ears. Somehow I know I'll be seeing a face when the gates open completely. I cringe in anticipation—then the phone rings. It's Kevin O'Shaughnessy, asking when I'll be in to bulk-mail the calendar. Hallwalls: starting my day off with a bang.

So that's it, my Hallwalls dream. Every time I think back on it—wondering why it won't go away—I try to figger out who was behind the clouds, screaming at me on my dream-driven surfboard. It wasn't Ron [Ehmke]; he hates the water. It ain't Ed [Cardoni]; the hair's all wrong. Matt [Schwonke], Julia [Dzwonkoski] and Armin [Heurich] aren't God figures to me. Angels of mercy, perhaps, but they're not gods. It's not even Sara [Kellner] or Kilissa [McGoldrick]—though I'm sure they've both wanted to scream bloody friggin' murder at me on occasion. Kevin was on the phone at the time, so it's not him either. My conclusion? It's gotta be Don Metz shouting at me to stop moping, pick up a paintbrush and get my ass in gear. Thanks, Don. Without you, I couldn't get up in the morning.

Dan Rigney was named Director of Performing Arts & Facilities in 1995.

RICHARD WICKA
COMFORT LEVEL
(March 1994)

I am at an opening. Someone asks me to be in a performance. There is a bedroom set on the stage. I lie down in the bed. A woman talks a little about perspective in art and then chastises herself: "I shouldn't be talking about this in a performance." She gives me a back rub. I sit down in an easy chair, looking at the audience in a mirror. I notice that they are all sitting in identical easy chairs. After 15 minutes of silence, someone announces that the chicken wings that were ordered have arrived, and therefore the performance is over. I stand up and address the audience: "I think I understand the meaning of this performance. I was at an 80% comfort level. I was aware of it. I was looking at you in the mirror. You were all sitting in similar types of chairs. Were you waiting for something to happen? Were you aware of your comfort level?"

Hardly anyone is paying attention to me.

They are anxious to get at the chicken wings.

Media artist/paralegal Richard Wicka was elected president of Hallwalls' Board of Directors in 1992.

RONALD EHMKE
A DREAM CHRONOLOGY

5/5/85: (*One year before joining staff*) Standard performance anxiety: onstage at Hallwalls in solo or group show without knowing what's going on or what my lines are.

6/4/89: Production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* by Yoshiko Chuma: "very inventive use of flashlights."

8/17/91: Full-length Carmelita Tropicana performance: "really good."

8/26/91: "I was going to some small theater which was staging a Neil Simon play—*The Odd Couple*?—that I was attending mainly to establish ties with the theater for an upcoming project."

4/3/93: New performance by Ann Carlson, incorporating cartoon characters.

5/5/94: (*One month after resigning*) "I return to HW to see a movie and realize there's a wait, so I wander around. I walk through a door and find myself in the middle of an elaborate spectacle of the kind I used to put on (though mine were nowhere near as large—65 performers, at least!). Who's running the show? It's very confusing; I can't tell what's 'on' and what's 'off,' etc. Part of me wants to complain ('next time you do this, try to make it more coherent'), but there's no one to complain to; it appears to be spontaneously happening, all over the place. Another part of me wants to relax into the audience/spectator role & relinquish my usual skepticism. But everywhere I wander, I realize I'm getting in the way. I decide that maybe this is a dress rehearsal, so I go back to the movie, but it's already started, so I give up and wake up."

5/8/94: I live in a secret room in the attic of Armin Heurich and Gail Brisson's home. After Ed Cardoni discovers the room, he proposes holding the next Artists & Models fundraiser in it, which I immediately discourage.



Robert Longo's bed at 30 Essex Street, ca.1974

CONTEXTS AND COINCIDENCES

A History in Fragments

What you see here is an unabashedly subjective, selective view of the last 25 years, chronicling not only Hallwalls' programming but glimpses at many other developments in the world at large, in the disciplines Hallwalls presents, and in the city it calls home. Rather than providing a complete list of events, exhibitions, and participating artists (which would be at least twice this size, but would be almost impossible to compile, given the periodic gaps in Hallwalls' own records), Elizabeth Licata and I have recorded obvious high points and representative samples of everything else. (Scholars and completists are directed to the files maintained at Hallwalls itself and among the archival holdings at SUNY Buffalo's Poetry/Rare Books Collection.) As might be expected of an organization with such deep ties to an ever-evolving, close-knit artistic community, many Buffalo-based artists presented work at Hallwalls dozens of times over the years (which might well include annual members shows and Summerspace exhibitions, which are given scant attention here); in most cases, their names are listed only once or twice, generally in conjunction with their first known exhibition, screening, or performance. I apologize in advance to anyone who feels excluded from or underrecognized in what may inadvertently but inevitably be seen as an "official" record.

As for the material on the top of each page, I have focused primarily on cultural and historical phenomena which directly or indirectly shaped the nature of discussion around Hallwalls, though in some cases I have included seemingly irrelevant events to give readers a sense of the sometimes vast gulf between what happened Here (in Buffalo, in the rarefied atmosphere of a contemporary art center) and There (in the rest of the universe). (Speaking of such disparities, I've chosen to discard the art world convention of marking seasons, which generally run from September of one year to May of the next, and to adopt the January-to-December calendar instead, trusting that the translation will not be too confusing.) This is certainly not intended to be a comprehensive history of the post-war era, though I have noted significant developments in academic critical theory, technology, and federal and private funding possibilities, because each of these had clear, demonstrable effects on the shape of programming. Finally, I've started the timeline five years before Hallwalls itself came into existence, in order to establish that the organization and others like it did not simply materialize out of thin air, that specific and direct seeds were being planted during the massive cultural changes of the late '60s and early '70s. One recurring implicit theme here is the changing meaning of "alternative" culture from the '60s to the '90s; there are others I leave you to discover for yourself.

-R.E.

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PRE-HISTORY

1969 The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam begins. The Chicago Seven conspiracy trial commences. The Freedom of Information Act is passed. The Art Workers Coalition forms in New York to promote museum reform. Police raids at the Stonewall Inn provoke several days of riots, providing the catalyst for a more militant gay liberation movement. David Reuben's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)*, presented as a normative guide to the sexual revolution, eventually sells 8 million copies. Lou Reed leaves the Velvet Underground. The first lunar landing is broadcast live on television. Artists and community media producers begin using Sony Portapak open-reel video equipment. Several video collectives and organizations form around the country, including the People's Video Theater, Raindance, Global Village, Channel One (featuring Chevy Chase), and Videofreex. The Howard Wise Gallery in New York presents *TV as a Creative Medium*, the first U.S. exhibition devoted exclusively to video art. A Defense Department initiative begins what will become the global linking of computers known as the Internet. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting founds both the PBS television network and National Public Radio. An outgrowth of Woodstock, New York's annual alternative cultural festivals attracts an estimated 500,000 people to upstate New York. Holly Solomon opens 98 Greene Street, one of the first "alternative spaces," in New York.

1970 U.S. forces invade Cambodia. Four student anti-war protesters are killed at Kent State in Ohio and two at Jackson State in Mississippi. The first American translation of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* is published. Several feminist journals and newspapers, including *Off Our Backs*, begin publication, joining Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*. A Johnson Administration-appointed panel on pornography issues a report urging the repeal of virtually all obscenity laws. The Senate holds the first Equal Rights Amendment hearings since 1958. The voting age is lowered to 18. The first nationwide Earth Day events are organized to call attention to ecological concerns on a grassroots level. Xerox establishes the Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) for non-commercial computer research. 112 Greene Street opens in New York. MOMA's *Information* exhibition brings widespread attention to conceptual art; much of the work in the show concerns the Vietnam War. A major exhibition of Fluxus works and Happenings is held in Cologne. Protests in New York and Los Angeles decry the underrepresentation of women artists in major museum collections and exhibitions. NEA chair Nancy Hanks successfully lobbies President Nixon and Congress for a substantial increase in funding. The Endowment's Visual Arts Program develops a category of funding for artist-run organizations. A substantial increase in state funding (from over \$2 million to over \$20 million in a single year) helps NYSCA establish the Creative Artists Public Service (CAPS) program, which provides fellowships to individual artists, and restructure its Film program to embrace electronic media projects. The Experimental Television Center is founded in Binghamton, NY (later relocating to Owego, NY in 1979).

1971 500,000 people demonstrate in Washington against the war, leading to 14,000 arrests. Riots break out at Attica prison, less than an hour from Buffalo. 340 French women sign a manifesto declaring that they have had abortions; the following year a similar petition appears in the U.S. (21 years later, the gesture will be repeated on Hallwalls' gallery walls during *The Abortion Project*.) The Boston Women's Health Book Collective publishes *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. The Beatles officially announce the breakup of the group. Sony introduces the U-Matic Video Tape Recorder. The Guggenheim Museum cancels a Hans Haacke exhibition on the grounds that it covers "specific social situations" not considered art. Vito Acconci performs *Seedbed* at Sonnabend Gallery in New York. The NEA creates Short Term Activities Grants to fund both performance art and cooperative ventures. New arts organizations include Artists Space and Women's Interart Center in New York. In Buffalo, the Langston Hughes Institute and Talking Leaves Bookstore open; Media Study/Bufalo begins offering public programs, workshops, and access to equipment.

1972 The Watergate scandal begins shortly after Richard Nixon is re-elected President. The Senate approves the Equal Rights Amendment. Congress ends the military draft. Philips manufactures the first consumer-grade video cassette recorder. Downtown Community Television (DCTV) and the Top Value Television (TNTV) documentary production group are formed. Word processing is introduced, as are the first video games. David Bowie records *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. Jesse Helms is elected to his first term in the U.S. Senate. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover dies.

1973 The Vietnam Peace Agreement is signed in Paris. The Supreme Court legalizes abortion with the *Roe v. Wade* decision. *Miller v. California* establishes new guidelines based on local community standards for determining obscenity. The American Psychiatric Association announces it no longer considers homosexuality a mental illness. PBS presents the documentary series *An American Family*, following the Loud family over seven months, including son Lance's adventures in the New York avant-garde art world. "Walk on the Wild Side," Lou Reed's musical tribute to the Warhol crowd, becomes a hit single. Thomas Pynchon publishes *Gravity's Rainbow*. Among the many organizations opening the year before Hallwalls, sparked in part by NEA Public Art Program funding for "alternative spaces," are NAME Gallery and Artemisia (Chicago), The Woman's Building (Los Angeles), Creative Time, and A.I.R. (New York). Congress enacts the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) to create federally funded jobs in fields with low employment, including the arts. Stanley Makowski is elected mayor of Buffalo.

1974 In the wake of the Watergate scandal and under threat of impeachment, Richard Nixon resigns and Gerald Ford becomes President. Economies around the world experience waves of inflation and recession. The kidnapping of Patricia Hearst by the Symbionese Liberation Army creates a media sensation. A number of state and federal regulations recognize women's right to use their "maiden" names for legal purposes. Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theatre performs *Pain(t)* in New York. Los Angeles Institute for Contemporary Art opens in California. The Fiction Collective is founded in Boulder, Colorado. Many writers affiliated with the Collective will read at Hallwalls over the next 20 years. The independent label Olivia Records is formed, managed by women and featuring only female performers. The Artists Committee of Western New York forms in protest of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's selection procedures for its annual exhibition of artists from the region. Artpark, a publicly funded state park dedicated to the arts, opens in Lewiston, NY, half an hour from Buffalo. Robert Muffaletto founds CEPA (Center for Exploratory and Perceptual Art), devoted originally to providing access to photography workshops and darkroom facilities in Buffalo, which gradually shifts its attention to exhibitions by established and emerging photographers. CEPA's first home is at 1377 Main Street; it subsequently moves to 3230 Main and then to 30 Essex Street in 1977, where it shares space and administration with Hallwalls. Charles Clough and Robert Longo seek funds for constructing an exhibition space at 30 Essex Street. Hallwalls activities begin before the gallery is complete, with formal and informal talks by visiting artist Robert Irwin at Buffalo State College.

*The Vietnam War ends as North Vietnamese troops enter Saigon; American troops leave Cambodia after Phnom Penh falls to the Khmer Rouge.

*Illegal CIA actions are uncovered, including records on 300,000 persons and infiltration of black, anti-war, and socialist organizations.

*The first personal computer is introduced.

**Bodyworks*, the first comprehensive American study of body art, is exhibited by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

*The video collective Ant Farm performs *Media Burn*. Members Chip Lord, Doug Michels, and Curtis Schreier visit Hallwalls later in the year.

*The New York-based experimental theater collective the Wooster Group begins work on its trilogy, *Three Places in Rhode Island*, directed by Elizabeth LeCompte and rooted in the autobiographical stories of Spalding Gray.

*Artists Space holds the first gallery exhibition of graffiti art.

*Washington Project for the Arts (WPA) opens in Washington, DC, along with the Alternative Museum (New York), La Mameille (San Francisco), and Real Art Ways (Hartford, CT).

*Tom Wolfe publishes *The Painted Word*, a scathing attack on modern art, billed as "another blast at the phonies." Laura Mulvey publishes "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in the British film journal *Screen*.

**Saturday Night Live* debuts.

*Leather-oriented *Drummer* begins publication; its financial success paves the way for other independently produced alternative gay and lesbian specialty magazines.

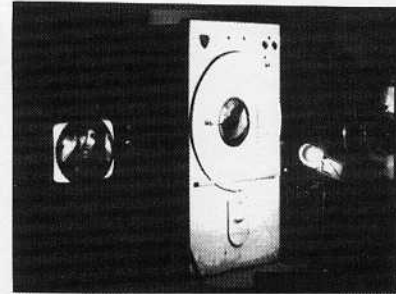
*John T. Molloy publishes *Dress for Success*.

*Nina Freudenheim opens a commercial gallery in Buffalo. Just Buffalo Literary Center begins its operations.

*Hallwalls receives its first grant (for \$8500) from the New York State Council on the Arts.

WILLOUGHBY SHARP VIDEO PERFORMANCES: APRIL '73-MARCH '75

A NEW LIVE VIDEO PERFORMANCE
OPENING SUNDAY MARCH 16, 5 P.M.
CLOSING SUNDAY MARCH 22, 5 P.M.



WILLOUGHBY SHARP PERFORMING
"FULL WOMEN", AUTO LAUNDRY I
ONSET, MASS. FEB. 25, 1975
PHOTO: RALPH MERCER

AT HALLWALLS, GALLERY OF THE
ASHFORD HOLLOW FOUNDATION, 30 ESSEX
BUFFALO, N.Y. 883-1041. OPEN DAILY
NOON-9 P.M. OPENING RECEPTION SUNDAY
MARCH 16, 5 P.M.

EXHIBITIONS

The first Hallwalls exhibition, *Spatial Survey*, opens at SUNY Buffalo's Gallery 219, including "sculptural and situational work" by Robert Longo, Joe Panone, Roger Rapp, and Andy Topolski. Subsequent shows include *Multiples* (also at Gallery 219, an exhibition of work made by Rochester artists associated with Visual Studies Workshop and by Buffalo artists, all of which was given away at the end of the exhibition), *Working on Paper: Developing the Idea* (the first show at 30 Essex: 100 works by 26 area artists), *Rose Scaletti Presents a 3-Ring Circus* (a living room environment designed by Longo, Philip Malkin, and Richard Zucker), *Photographics* (co-organized by Richard Link and presented at Buffalo State College, featuring Les Levine, Duane Michals, Joan Lyons, Nathan Lyons, and 3 others) and solo shows by Michael Zwack and Charles Clough. *Buffalo Books* displays 135 books made or found by 20 area artists. *ArtparkArt*

presents selective documentation of work by 24 artists who have presented work at Artpark during their season, including Paul Sharits, Woody Vasulka, Roger Edwards, Jody Pinto, and Alan Saret. *Open Space: A Summer Project* makes gallery space available for local artists to exhibit their work.

EVENTS

The first year of visiting artists and critics includes presentations by Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton, Willoughby Sharp, Dan Graham, Nancy Holt, Bruce Nauman, Frank Owen, Lucy Lippard, Barbara Rose, Vito Acconci (*Wallflower Halls*), Chris Burden, Max Neuhaus (*Listen*, performed at the Robert Moses Power Project), Robert Creeley, and Petr Kotik. George Howell begins *Writeratio*, a monthly series exploring the interaction of literature and other art forms.



Steina Vasulka at Hallwalls, March 1976.

- ★ North and South Vietnam are reunited and renamed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
- ★ Jimmy Carter is elected President.
- ★ JVC introduces VHS (video home system) tape.
- ★ The first American edition of Jacques Derrida's *De la Grammatologie* appears.
- ★ The cultural journals *October*, *Semiotext(e)*, and *Social Text* begin publication.
- ★ The first annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is held.
- ★ *Einstein on the Beach*, an opera created by Robert Wilson and Philip Glass, is performed in New York.
- ★ Christo's *Running Fence* in northern California brings widespread mass-media attention to Earth Art.
- ★ Franklin Furnace opens in New York, and Video Data Bank in Chicago. Afrika Bambaataa founds Zulu Nation, a social and political outlet for youth in the Bronx, which will play a key role in the developing hip-hop culture.
- ★ The Center for Positive Thought, a multi-arts center whose activities include dance, drama, music, and visual art by African-Americans, opens on the East Side of Buffalo.
- ★ Hallwalls receives its first NEA grant.

EXHIBITIONS

Hallwalls mounts *Approaching Painting*, a 3-part exhibition of 2-dimensional works by 22 artists, including Jennifer Bartlett, Bruce Boice, Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Richard Tuttle, Frank Owen, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra, Lynda Benglis, Ron Gorchov, Marilyn Lenkowsky, Elizabeth Murray, Barbara Schwartz, and Judy Pfaff. The exhibition *Noise* is conceived as a "report card" of the founding group's first year of activities. *ArtprkArt II* includes work by Lizzie Borden, Barbara Baracks, Ree Morton, and Michael Zwack, among others. One-person shows highlight the work of Linda Brooks, Diane Bertolo, Helen Brunner, Charles Clough, Ann Rosen, Cindy Sherman, Bob Dick, Peter Levin, Paula Longendyke, and others. A new residency series in collaboration with the Albright-Knox begins with Roger Welch's video installation about O. J. Simpson and Charles Simonds' work with children in Hallwalls' neighborhood.

The "Backspace" gallery debuts with work by Ladd Kessler.

EVENTS

Robert Longo presents the performance/installation *Artful Dodger*, another version of which subsequently appears at Vehicule Art in Montréal, and *The Buffalo Saga is Over*, a performance at a private residence in Buffalo. George Howell, Joe Panone, Harley Gaber, Richard Kelly, Richard Lainhart, Linda Cumiskey, and Jared Bark each present performances and/or multi-media installations. Alfonse Schilling and Woody Vasulka present an evening of stereo films; a later *Stereovisions* exhibit focuses on binocular works. A 5-night "Buffalo Film Festival" includes work by Anthony Bannon, Joseph Hryniak, Frank Mouris, Michael Sticht, and others, as well as a performance for voice, bass, and film by Julius Eastman. The *SEM Ensemble Festival* presents works by Linda Brooks, Richard Hayman, Ralph Jones, Petr Kotik, Leigh Landy, Robert Longo, Phill Niblock, Joseph Panone, Lune Prods, and Ned Sublette in

Delaware Park, throughout the grounds of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and at Hallwalls. Larry Lundy and several collaborators devise "Dada Day." Visiting speakers include James Collins, James Surls, Nina Sundell, Irving Sandler, Peter Frank, Helene Winer, and Marcia Tucker.

President Carter pardons 10,000 Vietnam draft resisters.

The Sex Pistols release "God Save the Queen" and *Never Mind the Bollocks*. Among the subsequent explosion of trend-setting albums released the same year are Talking Heads' *77*, the Ramones' *Rocket to Russia*, Television's *Marquee Moon*, Suicide, Blondie's *Plastic Letters*, and *The Clash*.

The First National Women's Conference is convened in Houston, Texas.

Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign defeats a Dade County, Florida gay rights ordinance, galvanizing an emerging activist movement.

The Christian Broadcast Network begins operation.

William Gates and Paul Allen found Microsoft.

The Treasures of Tutankhamen, prototype of countless "blockbuster" museum shows to come, tours the U.S.

President Carter appoints artist Livingston Biddle to head the NEA.

Pictures, an exhibition curated by Douglas Crimp at Artists Space in New York, brings national attention to the work of Robert Longo, Sherrie Levine, Jack Goldstein, David Salle, and Ericka Beckman (among others), all of whom had earlier received significant exposure at Hallwalls.

Susan Sontag's *On Photography* and Alan Sondheim's *Individuals* (an anthology of texts by artists) are published.

The collectively-edited feminist art journal *Heresies* begins publication; Donna Henes will discuss the new magazine at Hallwalls the following year.

LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) opens in California; *Women and Their Work* is organized in Austin, TX; the New Museum opens in the lobby of the New School for Social Research in Manhattan.

Artists in New York found Collaborative Projects (Colab), an interdisciplinary arts coalition rejecting the bureaucracy of funding agencies and the administrative structures of other artist groups. One Colab document points out that "the chances of a nonprofit institution getting a grant are 50 percent; an individual artist's is only 3 percent."

Vito Acconci completes his video project *The Red Tapes*.

The notorious "Blizzard of '77" brings the city to a standstill and cements Buffalo's reputation as a frozen hell-hole. Hallwalls artists respond with a "Snow Show" of work made during or about the storm, including *Buffalo is an Island*, a multi-media opera by Tony Conrad, Paul Lemberg, and Robert Longo.

James D. Griffin (nominally a Democrat, but affiliated with the Conservative and Right to Life parties) is elected mayor, a position he will hold for the next 16 years.

The Polish Community Center opens on the East Side of Buffalo; over the next several years, the center will co-sponsor a number of performances, Polish film festivals, and other events with Hallwalls.

The Buscaglia-Castellani Gallery of Niagara University opens in Niagara Falls, New York, with a strong emphasis on contemporary art.

Videopictive

MON. APRIL 18
ROMANCE
ED BOWES

WEDS. APRIL 20
THE RED TAPES
VITO ACCONCI

FRI. APRIL 22
TEMPERATURE TO EXIT
ROBERT LONGO

TEXT & TAPE:
NARRATIVE / FICTION,
VOICE, IMAGE ...

ARTISTS WILL BE PRESENT
ALL VIEWINGS AT 8:30
STUDIO, LECTURE HALL
BASEMENT

CO-PRODUCED BY: I-GSC, OGC, OVERSIGHT, COMMITTEE
FOR THE RESERVATION OF OUR MEDIA TV CENTER
ORGANIZED BY: STUDIO HALL

* CO-PRODUCED BY: THE NATIONAL STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

EXHIBITIONS

The group show *January* (held at Buffalo State) presents the work of Jonathan Borofsky, Scott Burton, Jack Goldstein, and Steve Gianakos.

Resemblance, an exchange show with Artists Space, features Troy Brauntuch, Matt Mullican, Paul McMahon, and David Salle in Buffalo, while Bertolo, Clough, Dwyer, Longo, Sherman, and Zwack are shown in New York. *New Abstract Objects* features works by artists including Martha Diamond, Ellen Phelan and Rodney Ripps. *When/when*, a group show co-sponsored by CEPA, features 56 Buffalo artists, including Ellen Carey, Tyrone Georgiou, and Peter Sowiski. Robert Smithson's sculptures and documentation of his earthworks receive a monthlong retrospective. Joel Shapiro and Raphael Ferrer each create work during residencies co-sponsored by the Albright-Knox. Nancy Dwyer, Rae Tyson, John Newman, Pierce Kamke, Ken Pelka, Judy Rifka (co-sponsored by CEPA), and others receive one-person shows. Edit deAk and Mike

(Walter) Robinson of *Art-Rite*, Cynthia Carlson, and Albright-Knox chief curator Steven Nash give presentations. *Hallwalls in Minneapolis* brings work by Buffalo artists to the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

PERFORMANCE

Visiting performance artists include Michael McClard (performing *Trial by TV*), Martha Wilson, Paul McMahon, Julia Heyward, and Matt Mullican. Charlotta Kotik curates *Projects and Performances*, a survey of conceptual art from Poland and Czechoslovakia. A series of dance events co-sponsored with Buffalo State presents Douglas Dunn, David Gordon, Valda Setterfield, and Tricia Brown. Locally based performers include Cindy Sherman, Lee Eiferman, Peggy Brady, Roger Denson, Larry Lundy, Ken Pelka, and Richard Seehausen.

MUSIC

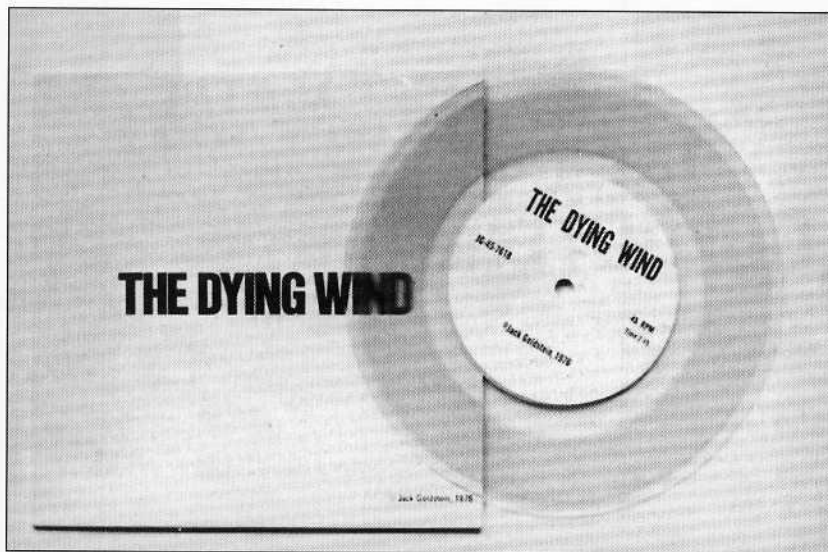
Events include concerts by Joan LaBarbara, Philip Glass, Paul Lemberg, David Hykes & Choir, Norbert Osterreich, and Jim Burton.

MEDIA

Yvonne Rainer, Babette Mangolte, Ericka Beckman, Paula Court, Malcolm LeGrice and Jack Griffiths present film screenings; Lisa Burroughs screens video work. Hallwalls receives its first NYSCA funding for video exhibitions and documentation of art events.

LITERATURE

Writers Constance deJong, Walter Abish, and Kathy Acker read their work.



WBFO postcard announcing Jack Goldstein's Nov. 3 appearance on the station and his solo exhibition at Hallwalls.

- ✱ Civil war begins in Nicaragua.
- ✱ Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyla becomes Pope John Paul II.
- ✱ The first American edition of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality, Volume I* appears.
- ✱ The New Museum presents an exhibition of *'Bad' Painting*; WPA organizes a "Punk Art" show; 112 Greene Street Workshop hosts *A Lesbian Show*.
- ✱ *High Performance*, a new journal devoted to performance art and related phenomena, begins publication.
- ✱ PS 122 opens in New York; CAGE (Cincinnati Artist Group Effort) in Ohio. The first national conference of artist-run visual arts organizations is held in Los Angeles; Hallwalls is represented by Charles Clough, Patrick O'Connell, Linda Neaman, and Kevin Noble.
- ✱ The first computer bulletin board (BBS) is created in Chicago.
- ✱ President Carter declares Love Canal, a subdivision in nearby Niagara Falls, an ecological disaster area.
- ✱ Buffalo's Convention Center opens downtown; Hallwalls participates in the grand opening ceremonies.
- ✱ The art center Peopleart/Bflo opens, presenting a blend of exhibitions, readings, performances, and films to Buffalo audiences.
- ✱ Following the departure of Charles Clough, Patrick O'Connell and John Maggiotto each serve terms as Hallwalls' director.

EXHIBITIONS

A group show combines an installation of Duchamp's *Green Box* with works by William Wegman and Sherrie Levine. An exhibition of work by 10 artists from Los Angeles includes Dorit Cypis, Robert Cumming, Allen Ruppersberg, and Ilene Segalove. Jack Goldstein exhibits graphic work, phonograph recordings, and a film installation, and appears on the legendary "Oil of Dog" radio program on WBFO. Installations by David Kulik, Kevin Noble, Michael Preisner, Ladd Kessler, and Peggy Yunque fill the gallery. The "Matrix Room" is created, presenting the work of Craig Billings and Jerry Einsteadig, among others. 17 Hallwalls-affiliated artists appear in an exchange show with NAME Gallery in Chicago. Carl Andre, Donna Hefes, and David Salle give artist's talks. Hallwalls artists (including John Gasper, John Maggiotto, Una McClure, and Armand Saiia) are hired by CETA to produce and present work at various community centers throughout Buffalo in the "Art for All" project.

PERFORMANCE

Visiting performance artists include Jill Kroesen, William Hellerman, Simone Forti and Peter van Riper. Constance deJong, and Laurie Anderson (*Suspended Sentences*). Spalding Gray discusses and performs excerpts from the Wooster Group's play *Rumstick Road*.

MUSIC

Petr Kotik & SEM Ensemble, Eberhard Blum, and Francis Utti, among others, present concerts.

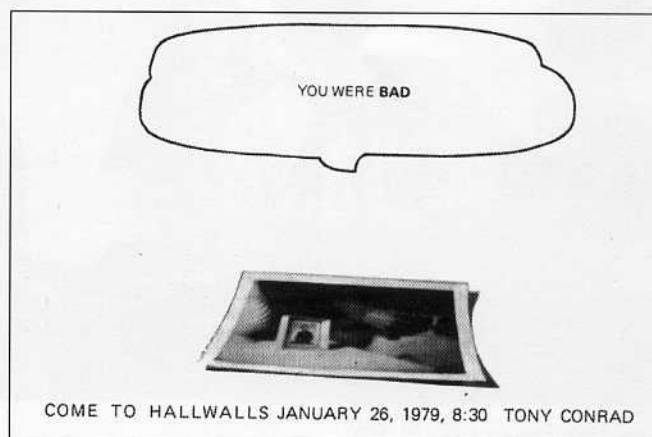
MEDIA

Peter Rubin presents a retrospective of Dutch avant-garde film; Beth and Scott B show *G Man*; Katherine Bigelow screens *Set-Up*. Additional media presentations include film by Ericka Beckman and video by Jaime Davidovitch and Jim Burton.

LITERATURE

The Writratio series (rechristened Fiction Diction) presents readings by Richard Henderson, Ursule Molinaro, Jackson MacLow, David Antin, Donna Wyszomierski, & others. Anne Turyn begins publication of the *Top Stories* series of chapbooks, which eventually moves to NYC and becomes an autonomous publication.

- The U.S. inflation rate is the worst in 33 years.
- Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister of Britain.
- Americans are held in Iran after the Ayatollah Khomeini establishes a fundamentalist government. Late-night news accounts of the 444-day hostage crisis gradually evolve into a television series, ABC's *Nightline*.
- A major nuclear accident occurs at the Three Mile Island facility in Pennsylvania.
- The Moral Majority is founded by Jerry Falwell and others in Lynchburg, Virginia, in opposition to gay rights, abortion, feminism, pornography, Communism, and the SALT II treaty. A communications satellite devoted to religious programming is launched into space; an estimated 1400 radio and television stations across the country now specialize in Christian broadcasts.
- Women Against Pornography forms in New York City.
- Gay activists protest the filming of the movie *Cruising* and the reduced sentence for Dan White in the 1978 murder of San Francisco mayor George Moscone and city supervisor Harvey Milk. Later in the year, more than 100,000 people participate in the first national Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights March on Washington.
- Christopher Lasch publishes *The Culture of Narcissism*, which critiques (among other cultural trends) the autobiographical focus of recent art and literature.
- *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, a box-office failure when first released, becomes a midnight-movie audience-participation phenomenon.
- Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* installation draws national attention.
- Joseph Beuys receives a major U.S. retrospective at the Guggenheim.
- Video artists and organizations form Media Alliance, dedicated to advancing media arts in New York State.
- The cultural activism collective Group Material begins work in New York.
- The Carter-administration NEA receives one of the largest budget increases in the Endowment's history.
- Construction begins on Buffalo's Light Rail Rapid Transit line, rendering much of Main Street (including, most notably, the city's downtown business and shopping district) inaccessible for more than six years.
- Ujima Theatre Company emerges out of a series of workshops held at Buffalo's Center for Positive Thought.
- Bill Currie becomes Hallwalls' director.



EXHIBITIONS

Four Artists, guest-curated by Charles Clough, features Ross Bleckner, Grégoire Müller, Julian Schnabel, and Jeff Way. The artists, curator, and essayist Valentin Tatransky present a panel on "Painting in New York Today." 16 artists associated with NAME Gallery in Chicago present their work at Hallwalls. Additional exchange shows feature Artspace in Peterborough, Ontario and A Space in Toronto. Artists receiving one-person shows include Kevin Noble, Cindy Sherman, Cavellini, Auste Peciura, Tony Conrad, and Tom Damrauer. Summerspace artists include Don Metz, Andy Topolski, Lee Franke, Dan Rumley, Mathew Spencer, Debra Jenks, Dan Levine, and Patty Wallace. Barbara Rose and Linda Cathcart give talks at the Albright-Knox.

PERF./MUSIC

Tony Conrad, Bob Carroll, Eric Bogosian (*Slavery*), Jill Kroesen, the Kipper Kids, and Judy Nylon with Marty Watt, among others, present performance works. "The Performing Composer" series presents Rhys Chatham, Peter Gordon, Alec Bernstein, Lydia Lunch (*Music Theory*), Arthur Russell, and David Van Tieghem.

MEDIA

Visiting filmmakers include Joe Gibbons, Charlie Ahearn, D. John Davis, and Vivienne Dick. Kevin Fix creates a film installation in the Matrix Room. Ed Bowes and Eric Mitchell present video works.

LITERATURE

Fiction Diction presents Dick Higgins, Suzanne Johnson, Ron Sukenick, Raymond Federman, Gail Vachon, Anne Costello, Lucy Lippard, Penelope Prentiss, and Kathy Acker.

1980

- *Ronald Reagan is elected President.
- *Civil war rages in El Salvador.
- *John Lennon is shot in New York City.
- *Ted Turner founds the Cable News Network (CNN).
- *The Whitney Museum pays \$1 million for Jasper Johns' painting *Three Flags*, the highest amount ever paid for the work of a living artist.

- *Colab and the alternative space Fashion/Moda transform an abandoned massage parlor in Manhattan into an illegal, multi-disciplinary gallery space for *The Times Square Show*.
- *A coalition of artists in New York form Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D).
- *The National Alliance of Media Arts Centers (NAMAC, later renamed the National Alliance for Media Arts and Cultures) is founded.
- *The Artists Committee of Western New York forms Artists Gallery, which moves into the 30 Essex Street complex.
- *In September, Hallwalls and CEPA move from Essex Street to 700 Main Street in downtown Buffalo's newly christened "Theater District."



Disband in performance, Oct. 28, 1980.

EXHIBITIONS

Notion and Notation: A Three Part Exhibition of Artists' Books and Book-like Works features a presentation by Ida Applebroog. The first show in the new location, *Emblems and Paint*, presents work by Don Hazlitt, Christopher Knowles, Lois Lane, and Janis Provisor. The gallery presents one-person shows by Jennifer Bartlett (in conjunction with the Albright-Knox), Nancy Dwyer, and James Hartel. The Matrix Room houses exhibitions and installations by Keith Sanborn, Biff Henrich, Bill Currie, Lee Franke, Robert Collignon, and John Toth. A "Collectors' Series" includes presentations by Robert T. Buck, Nina Freudenheim, Marvin Heiferman, Scott Rucker, and Herbert and Dorothy Vogel. The *Hallwalls: Five Years* retrospective, organized by G. Roger Denson, originates at Upton Gallery at Buffalo State, then travels to A Space in Toronto, The New Museum in New York, and WPA in Washington, DC.

PERF./MUSIC

John Lurie, Stuart Sherman (*Eleventh Spectacle: The Erotic*), Michael Smith, Y-Pants (Barbara Ess, Virginia Piersol, and Gail Vachon), Glenn Branca, Arthur "Juini" Booth, Mary Beth Edelson (in conjunction with an exhibition at the Albright-Knox), Disband (Donna Henes, Ilona Granet, Ingrid Sischoy, and Martha Wilson), Robert Stewart, and Jeff Way, among others, present concerts or performance works.

MEDIA

The exhibition *Installation: Video* features installations and documentation of works by Dara Birnbaum, Patrick Clancy, Wendy Clarke, Brian Eno, Ken Feingold, Dan Graham, Gary Hill, Sara Hornbacher, and Shigeko Kubota. Also presenting videotapes and films throughout the year are Richard Serra & Clara Weyergraf, Bruce Posner, Les Levine, Jon Rubin, Manuel De Landa, Tom Busch, Barbara Lattanzi, Bob and Bob, and James Anderson.

LITERATURE

Fiction Diction presents Leslie Scalapino, Jo Lutz, Michael Tetenman, Ivy Goodman, George Chambers, Raymond Federman, Steve Katz, Harry Mathews, Judy Keeler, and Jennifer Bartlett (reading from her unpublished journals).

*François Mitterand becomes President of France. Pope John Paul II and President Reagan are wounded in assassination attempts; Anwar Sadat is assassinated.

*Martial law is declared in Poland, suspending the activities of the new trade union, Solidarity.

*Depression hits the economies of countries around the world; U.S. unemployment reaches 4.6 million.

*The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports the presence of what will come to be known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in five gay men in Los Angeles.

*IBM introduces its Personal Computer (PC).

*President Reagan fires 11,500 striking members of the air traffic controllers union.

*The Reagan administration attacks the NEA's structure and its support of political art, but the agency's already allocated funds are preserved by Congress. Reagan appointee Frank Hodsoll becomes the new chairman of the agency.

*Reagan eliminates CETA, in the process destroying hundreds of federally funded jobs in the arts.

*The MTV network debuts, creating a demand for visually arresting images to advertise rock songs. The music videos themselves, as well as the network's commercials and self-promotional spots, rely heavily on styles and techniques lifted from experimental film and video. Over the next 13 years, Hallwalls co-founder Robert Longo and many of the artists presented at Hallwalls will be hired by the network and/or record companies to make videos and spots.

*The rap group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5 release "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel," an early example of hip-hop collage.

*Janelle Reiring and Helene Winer (the former directors of Artists Space) open the gallery Metro Pictures in Soho; among the artists they represent are Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, and Michael Zwack.

*Fun Gallery opens in New York's East Village, one of the first of a wave of commercial galleries in the neighborhood.

*Laurie Anderson's independently produced single "O Superman" becomes a major chart success in Britain and on American college radio stations, leading to a contract with Warner Brothers and bringing widespread attention to the medium of performance art.

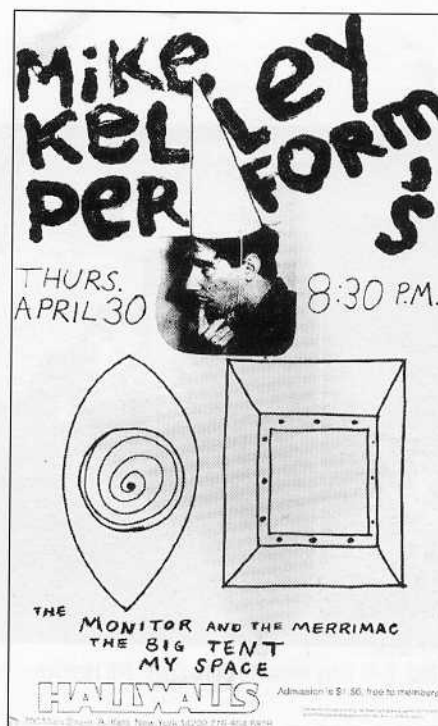
*Paper Tiger TV, a nationally distributed video series offering alternative "readings" of mainstream media, debuts.

*Congress passes the Economic Recovery Tax Act, ostensibly intended to stimulate private support of nonprofit organizations, although the measure's effectiveness is soon questioned.

*The NEA creates an Arts in Education program, intended to bring artists into public schools. Hallwalls receives funding for its own Education program, which places visiting artists in area schools.

*The Buffalo Chamber of Commerce begins its "We're Talking Proud" campaign, encouraging citizens to stop "letting America put down our city."

*The student-run Bethune Gallery at SUNY Buffalo opens in a once-abandoned factory, showing work by both students and visiting artists as well as occasionally presenting performances and lectures.



EXHIBITIONS

Color, Light, and Mass: Ten Sculptors includes work by Nancy Arlen, R. M. Fischer, Taro Suzuki, and John Toth. *Figuring* focuses on the work of Eric Fischl, Thomas Lawson, David Sharpe, and Mike (Walter) Robinson; the artists all participate in a panel discussion. *Fictive Victims* features Gretchen Bender, Peter Coates, Mark Innerst, and others. *Figures, Forms, & Expressions* (on view at Hallwalls and the Albright-Knox) includes work by John Ahearn, Ellen Carey, Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Leon Golub, Robert Longo, Robert Mapplethorpe, David Salle, Salome, Joel Shapiro, Laurie Simmons, and others. An exhibition of 3-D photos by Jim Pomeroy is presented in conjunction with CEPA & the Albright-Knox. Other artists receiving exhibitions include Diane Bertolo, Jay Coogan, Jedd Garet, Larry Lundy, Debra Jenks, and Ellen Steinfeld. In the Matrix Room: Barbara Buckman, Michael Miller, Tom Loonan, Glenn Kroetsch, Bill Huggins, Paul Chinelli, Daniel Levine, Patty Walsh, Karen Moebius, George Howell, Michael Bauman, Jack Edson, and Susan Copley.

PERFORMANCE

Visiting performers include a return visit by Eric Bogosian (*Funhouse*), John Bernd & Tim Miller (*Live Boys*), Winston Tong & Bruce Geduldig, Theodora Skipitares, Mike Kelley (*The Monitor and the Merrimac*), and Boris Policeband. Buffalo performers include Brian Szpakowski, Bob Collignon, and Mitzi Smyntek.

MUSIC

Performers include Nigel Rollings, Jules Baptiste/Red Decade, David Kulik, Paul Szp, Tony Biloni, Paul McMahon, Dave Alderson, John Bacon, Greg Piontek, Mike Basinski, John Neumann, Ed Sobala, Andrew Topolski, Peter van Riper, and others.

FILM

Recent works are screened by J. Hoberman, John Baldessari, Michael Oblowitz, Valie Export, Barbara Broughel, Russ Rizzo, Joe Kotas, Joe Hryniak, Marcelle Pecot, and J. T. Vale.

VIDEO

Dara Birnbaum, Judy Rifka, Matthew Geller, Jane Brettschneider, Ed Bowes, Alan Sondheim, Tony Oursler, Connie Coleman, and Allan Powell screen their work.

LITERATURE

Readings by Robert Coover, Raymond Federman, Ron Silliman, Edmund White, Lynne Tillman, Walter Abish, Richard Brautigan, David Sipos, Donna Wyszomierski, Norma Kassirer, Jay Boyar, Anne Pluto, R. D. Pohl, Carole Southwood, and Geraldine Wilson, among others.

- More than 600,000 people gather in New York's Central Park for the "No Nukes" rally, the largest of all anti-nuclear demonstrations.
- The Equal Rights Amendment lapses without ratification after heated debate in Congress.
- The compact disc player is introduced.
- The CDC reports 1,208 AIDS deaths by the end of the year.
- John Jesurun's multi-part performance serial *Change in a Void Moon* begins at the Pyramid Club in New York.
- Gretchen Bender's solo exhibition, *Change Your Art*, consists solely of works appropriated from her contemporaries, including Longo, Salle, & Schnabel.
- David Letterman's highly ironic, relentlessly self-reflexive late-night talk show premieres on NBC.
- Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5 release "The Message," shifting the content of rap music toward social commentary.
- The Brooklyn Academy of Music initiates its annual Next Wave festival, providing a high-profile, big-budget venue for experimental music, dance, and performance art.
- Hilton Kramer founds *The New Criterion*, a conservative cultural journal.
- *Re/Search* publishes its *Industrial Culture Handbook*.
- The National Association of Artists Organizations (NAAO) is incorporated, with Hallwalls as one of its founding members.
- Mario Cuomo is elected Governor of New York, a post he will hold for the next twelve years.
- The Bethlehem Steel mill, third largest in the country and one of the city's major employers, shuts down the majority of its facilities and lays off 7,500 workers.
- The *Courier-Express* folds, leaving Buffalo a one-newspaper town. At the same time, the national paper *USA Today* hits the stands.



The Vores, ca. 1982. L-R: Gary Nickard, Dave Kulik, Biff Henrich.

EXHIBITIONS

Agitated Figures: The New Emotionalism (curated by Hal Bromm) includes work by Roseanne Generalli, Keith Haring, and Jane Rosen, all of whom speak in a panel discussion. Judy Pfaff has a solo show in conjunction with her installation at the Albright-Knox. In the Matrix Room: Mary Louise Geering, Michael Sticht, and Dana Wolfson.

PERFORMANCE

Beth Lapides, Michael Smith, Constance DeJong, Yura Adams, Marshall Reese, Rob Danielson, P. D. Burwell, Louis Grenier, and Pat Hall stage works.

MUSIC

William Hellerman, Juini Booth, and Stu Shephard are among the artists presenting concerts.

FILM

A group show of Pittsburgh filmmakers includes works by Peggy Ahwesh, Tony Buba, and Bruce Posner. Other screenings during the year include those by Gail Camhi, Abigail Child, James Casebere, Michael Guccione, and Kathryn High.

VIDEO

Jack Walworth and Martha Rosler screen tapes. Michel Auder presents *The Video Diary of a Madman*, or *The Day Reflects My Mood*, co-written by Michael Zwack and starring Eric Bogosian.

LITERATURE

Featured readers include Raymond Carver, Jonathan Baumbach, Jayne Anne Phillips (in conjunction with Just Buffalo), Tom Lucas, Sharon McPeters, Emanuel Fried, Phillip Pawlowski, and Edmund Cardoni. Hallwalls supports the publication of *Cave Canem*, with literary and visual contributions from Kim Gordon, Jenny Holzer, Mike Kelley, Tory Oursler, Dan Walworth, and others.

*The U.S. invades Grenada; the American government bars journalists from the island during the first two days of the action.

*Ronald Reagan refers to the Soviet Union as "the Evil Empire;" his wife Nancy initiates her "Just Say No" campaign to fight drug use.

*The first English translation of Jean Baudrillard's essay "The Precession of Simulacra" appears, along with Hal Foster's anthology *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. The English version of semiotician Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* becomes a best-seller and eventually a motion picture.

*Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh spend a year tied together with eight feet of rope.

*Laurie Anderson performs her four-part, seven-hour epic *United States* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

*The Seneca Women's Peace Encampment is set up in upstate New York.

*Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon draft an anti-pornography ordinance.

*NEA chair Frank Hodsoll vetoes a grant to the Heresies Collective and PAD/D.

*Buffalo police raid City Lights, the city's best-known gay bar, located a block north of Hallwalls and the Theater District.

*The quarterly *Buffalo Arts Review*, published by the Irving Press Collective, first appears, featuring reviews and commentary by local writers, many of them (including R. D. Pohl, Craig Keller, Edmund Cardoni, and Ronald Ehmke) closely associated with Hallwalls.

Gaia, Mon Amour

a performance by
Rachel Rosenthal



Text published in conjunction with performance at Hallwalls, Nov. 10, 1983.

EXHIBITIONS

Solo exhibitions include *The Sublime*, featuring Mike Kelley's drawings; an installation by the collective TODT; and the work of John Clemens Schwartz. Barbara Lattanzi's *Doublecross* opens as a satellite exhibition at Buffalo State College's Upton Hall; Lattanzi later participates in *Mechanizations*, along with Mr. Apology, Daniel Lowenstein, and Kurt Ossendorf. *Comic Relief* includes work by Lynda Barry, Sue Coe, Art Spiegelman, and others. *Texas on Paper*, curated by Linda Cathcart and Cheryl Brutvan, includes work from James Surls, Linda Blackburn, and Danny Williams, while a collaboration with the Albright-Knox features drawings by Alan Saret. *Picture Perfect* (guest-curator: Daniel Levine) includes Brett Arnoldo, Ann Finneran, Russell Floersch, Bill Huggins, and William Orcutt. Other artists presented include Kiki Smith, Roger Denson, Carroll Dunham, Rose Popper, Jenlea Zemple, Jonathan Ellis, Carrie Feder, Paul Lammie, Gregg Smith, Norma Kassirer, Stephen Frailey, Perry Hoberman, Kate Eilerstein, Robert Collignon, and Joan Posluszny.

PERFORMANCE

Performances include Rachel Rosenthal's *Gaia, Mon Amour*, Jeff McMahon's *Believe You Me*, Charles Dennis' *New York 1985*, Nancy Evan's *Cabin Fever*, Ann Magnuson's *After Dante*, and Alex Roshuk's *A Simple Story*. Other performers include Wendy Maharry, Paul Szp, Stephen Gallagher, Pat Hall, Frankie Lymon's Nephew, Mark Freeland, Ronald Ehmke, and Brian Szpakowski.

MUSIC

Performers presenting concerts include Gretchen Langheld with Barbara Merjan, James Kasprovicz and William Lankin, Jean Paul Curtney, and Steven Swartz with Floorplay Contemporary Dance Theatre.

FILM

Beth and Scott B screen their new film, *Vortex*, while *Berlin: Super 8* (curated by Keith Sanborn) features German filmmakers Axel Brand, Anette Maschmann, Christoph Doering, Die tödliche Doris, and others. Films are also screened by Dan Walworth, Terry Allen, Robert Attanasio, and Ericka Beckman, among others.

VIDEO

Tapes are screened by Doug Hall (at Media Study/Bufalo), Paper Tiger Television, Barbara Buckner, and Ulrike Rosenbach, among others. *New Buffalo Video* includes work by Tony Billoni, Armin Heinrich, Debbie Jordan, Jody Lafond, Brian Springer, and Julie Zando.

LITERATURE

Writers presented include Alice Walker, David Wojnarowicz, Keith Hudson, William S. Wilson, Joseph Francavilla, Samuel Delaney, Kate Wheeler, Grace Paley, T. Coraghessan Boyle, Cookie Mueller, Emily XYZ, Carole Southwood, and Edmund Cardoni, among others.



Motives: Kathy High, Sugar and Salt.

- ★ President Reagan is re-elected; he proposes spending \$26 billion on the Strategic Defense Initiative, nicknamed "Star Wars" after the high-grossing fantasy film.
- ★ Newsweek marks "The Year of the Yuppie."
- ★ Bernhard Goetz shoots four young black men on a New York subway car.
- ★ Apple Computer introduces the Macintosh, a graphics-based, "user-friendly" microcomputer developed with significant contributions by artists. William Gibson coins the term "cyberspace" in his science fiction novel *Neuromancer*.
- ★ AT&T's monopoly over telecommunications is challenged when federal courts order it broken into several smaller regional companies.
- ★ Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America unites performers, writers, and visual artists in 200 cities for a series of events combining political protest with artistic experimentation and cultural reportage.
- ★ The New Museum publishes *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, edited by Brian Wallis.
- ★ Jenny Holzer presents *Sign on a Truck*, a mobile street performance soliciting and incorporating large-scale video and text reactions to issues raised in the presidential elections.
- ★ Run-D.M.C. records "Rock Box," fusing rap with heavy metal music.
- ★ Toy manufacturer Fisher-Price, one of the most successful Buffalo-based companies, begins to shift its operations to twin plants on the Texas-Mexico border.
- ★ *Second Story*, a weekly alternative newspaper covering politics and culture in Buffalo, debuts; it soon folds after difficulties collecting advertising revenue.
- ★ El Museo Francisco Oller Y Diego Rivera, a gallery dedicated to Latino artists, opens on Buffalo's West Side.
- ★ Buffalo artist Billie Lawless is commissioned to create a metal and neon sculpture, "Green Lightning." Mayor Griffin declares the work "obscene," a public nuisance, and orders it dismantled.

EXHIBITIONS

Motives, a collaborative exhibition with CEPA and the Albright-Knox, features Jane Dickson, Christy Rupp, Joseph Nechvatal, Kathryn High, Eva Buchmüller, and others. Other group shows include *Re-Placement*, with Peter Halley, Louise Lawler, and Allan McCollum, among others; *Dramatic Dimensions*, with Michael Byron, Jon Kessler, and others; *Opposing Force*, with Richard Armijo, Andrea Fraser, Tony Gray, and Julia Kidd; and *Objectivity*, with Jeff Koons, Marilyn Minter, and Haim Steinbach, among others. Solo exhibitions present artists David Bowes, Mario Merz (with the Albright-Knox), Robin Winters, Peter Nadin, Toni Paterson, Barbara Broughel, Barbara Rowe, Stiller Dawson, Joan Posluszny, and others. *Personal Effects*, an outside exhibition at Buffalo State College, features 70 Buffalo artists, including Bruce Adams, David Cinquino, Cathy Howe, Gary Nickard, Paul Sharits, and Ellen Steinfeld, among many others.

PERFORMANCE

"Fallout," a series of events at the Italian American Community Center highlighting the East Village club scene, is guest-curated by Cornelius Conroy (8 BC) and Bob Bradley (Pyramid Cocktail Lounge), and features Ethyl Eichelberger, John Kelly, His Master's Voice, Disturbed Form Theater, d.j. Ivan Ivan, and the Flapjacks of Sorrow. Visiting artists include Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks (*A Night at the Millionaires Club*), Tim Miller (*Democracy in America*), Christian Marclay, the Dark Bob, and Mark Pauline of Survival Research Laboratories. Other performers include Tony Billoni, George Scherer, Brent Scott, Mitzi Smyntek, Biff Henrich, George Howell, Fritz Bacher, the Convivial Po-Po's, Eileen O'Connor, Louis Mang, and Billy Bear. Stephen Gallagher guest-curates a series for Creative Time's Art on the Beach series, including Buffalo-based performers Tony Billoni, Tony Conrad, Ronald Ehmke & Catherine Howe, and George Scherer & Brian Szpakowski.

MUSIC

Performers include Linda Fisher (*Aurora*), Jon Gibson, Yvar Mikhashoff (presenting an "Olympic Piano Event") Ward Hartenstein (*Sounds in Clay*), Gregory Piontek (*Rondo for the Congo*), and others.

FILM

A seven-part special series, *Film as Altered/Alternative Reality*, is inaugurated, featuring works by Bruce Baillie, Kenneth Anger, John Jesurun, Joseph Cornell, Bruce Connor, Tony Conrad and Barbara Lattanzi, among others. Additional film screenings feature Margaret (Peggy) Ahwesh, Franco Marinari, Nancy Golden, Kevin Fix, Stephen Gallagher, and others.

VIDEO

Works are presented by Lynn Blumenthal, Matthew Geller, Carol Szymanski, Paul Dougherty, Tony Oursler, Joe Gibbons, Doug Hall, Ian Murray, and others. Special presentations include *Modern Danger*, curated by Lynn Blumenthal, with work by Branda Miller, Ed Rankus, and others; *Canadian Video/Video Canadiens*, and works on romance/desire by Lee Eiferman, Barbara Broughel, Aline Mare and Bradley Eros, and others. The program *Video and/on Performance* features documentation of Hallwalls performances by Barbara Allen, John Sex, Ann Magnuson, Karen Finley, and others.

LITERATURE

Writers presented include Marianne Hauser, Mark Leyner, George Howell, Stokes Howell, Carl Clatterbuck, Lisa Blauschild and Catherine Texier.

★ Mikhail Gorbachev becomes General Secretary of the Soviet Communist party and initiates the *glasnost* and *perestroika* campaigns.

★ The first desktop publishing software for home use becomes available.

★ Sony introduces 8 mm video, a format soon embraced by camcorder activists in Buffalo and throughout the world.

★ The death of movie star Rock Hudson makes AIDS a front-page news story.

★ Tipper Gore founds the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), calling for advisory labels on albums and government investigation into song lyrics and packaging.

★ *Rambo: First Blood Part 2* is a box-office smash.

★ *Alive from Off Center*, a showcase for experimental performance, dance, and video, debuts on PBS.

★ *Spin* magazine hits the stands: a glossy national music magazine which pays significantly more attention to smaller labels and emerging artists than its chief competitor, *Rolling Stone*. Regular writers include Glenn O'Brien, Dennis Cooper, Mark Leyner, and William T. Vollman, all of whom are featured in Hallwalls' Literature program.

★ The multi-disciplinary ensemble Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo forms in San Diego and Tijuana. The Guerrilla Girls, "conscience of the art world," stage anonymous actions protesting gender and racial discrimination in the arts.

★ The Trico Corporation announces plans to move the bulk of its windshield-wiper manufacturing operations from Buffalo to the Mexican border.

★ During the Blizzard of '85, Mayor Griffin orders the streets closed to all but pedestrian traffic and exhorts citizens to "Stay inside, grab a six-pack, and watch a good football game."

★ After a year of presenting performances at the Italian American Community Center, Hallwalls acquires a former fur-storage vault on the second floor of 700 Main Street (dubbed "the Vault") for live & media events.



Video still from *I am a Nightclub*, Fritz Bacher, 1985.

EXHIBITIONS

Featured artists include Arnold Mesches, the collective Group Material, Cynthia Carlson (in conjunction with the Albright-Knox), Peter Burgess, Jessica Diamond, Jackie Felix, Rosemary Lyons, Kevin Wolff, and Michael Herbold. Group shows include *Images of War*, with John Hull, Leon Golub, & Deborah Bright; *Relative Meaning*, with Joe Andoe, Jonathan Waite, Pam Glick, and others; and *Past and Future Perfect*, with David Deutsch, Annette Lemieux, and others. Other exhibiting artists include Nancy Golden, Mark Joyce, Dana Hatchett, Norma Kassirer, Susan Barnes, and Becky Koenig.

PERFORMANCE

Hallwalls releases Christian Marclay's *Record Without a Cover*. John Jesurun presents the world premiere of *Riderless Horse*, featuring Steve Buscemi and Sanghi Wagner. Performing artists include Lydia Lunch, Komar and Melamid, Notorische Reflexe, Nick Zedd's Theatre of Shame, Stephanie Skura, Stephen Gallagher (*A Common Bond*), Public Domain, and Judith Ren-Lay. *The Hal Barber Talent Show* (a mock television program featuring such artists as Green Jello (later renamed Green Jelly), Dr. Strange, House-o'-Pork, and Ludmilla) debuts and *Andy Warhol's Lower East Side Sampler* (a live event tied to a record project which was never completed) features Ethyl Eichelberger, Hapi Phace, The Jickets, and They Might Be Giants.

MUSIC

Performers include Scott Johnson, Jerry Hunt, Jack Wright, Hugh Levick/Saxophone Fleshtronics, James Perone, Don Metz, and others. The *NYSCA New Music Network Tour* features the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Robert Dick, Meltable Snaps It (with Christian Marclay and David Moss), Jane Ira Bloom, the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, and others.

FILM

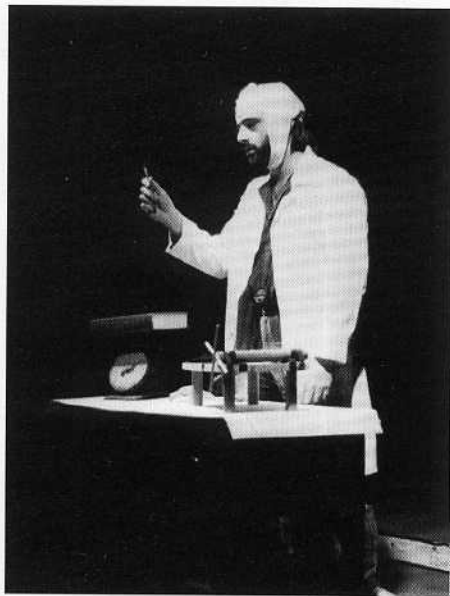
The *Film as Altered/Alternative Reality* series continues with films by Standish Lauder, Jonas Mekas, Michael Snow, and Sandy Daly, among others. Other filmmakers presented include Barbara Bloom, Joe Gibbons, Sharon Greytak, Barbara Hammer (as part of Hallwalls' first gay & lesbian film series), Sohki Wagner, Patty Wallace, Richard Kern, and Nick Zedd.

VIDEO

Videotapes from West Germany features Marina Abramovic/Ulay, Michael Klier, Gusztav Hamos, and others. *Political Messages: A Minute of Your Time* offers local artists their first access to Hallwalls' new video equipment in order to make short political tapes. Other presentations include *Scratching the Surface: Four New Narratives* (works by Matthew Geller, Tony Oursler, John Greyson, and Dale Hoyt), Fritz Bacher's *I Am a Nightclub*, a survey of media work from Milwaukee (with Cathy Cook, Paul Dickinson, and others), screenings by Bruce & Norman Yonemoto and Lisa Steele & Kim Tomczak.

LITERATURE

Featured writers include Harvey Pekar, Patrick McGrath, Arnoldo Ramos, Leslie Fiedler, Welch Everman, Jay Cantor, R.D. Pohl, Alan Bigelow, Murphy, Martin Pops, and others.



Edmund Cardoni performing in "The 4:59 Show," Oct. 1986.

- ★The US bombs Libya in retaliation for acts of aggression in the Middle East.
- ★A nuclear accident at the Chernobyl power plant in the USSR results in the evacuation of 135,000 people.
- ★The space shuttle Challenger explodes on live television.
- ★The Meese Commission on pornography calls for stronger restrictions on the sale and distribution of erotic material.
- ★Congress passes the Tax Reform Act, reducing tax incentives for charitable donations of artworks to museums and limiting artists' ability to claim expenses as tax deductions.
- ★Laurie Anderson appears in an advertisement for American Express, part of a mid-'80s wave of advertising campaigns featuring photographs of contemporary artists, writers, and musicians, including Robert Longo (for The Gap), Tama Janowitz, and John Lurie.
- ★C. Carr's profile of performance artist Karen Finley in *The Village Voice* sparks widespread controversy among people who have not seen her work or even read the article.
- ★The journal *Zone* makes its first appearance.
- ★DC Comics publishes Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' serialized graphic novel *Watchmen*, inspiring a wave of adult-themed comics and independent publishers.
- ★Deep Dish TV begins providing satellite transmission of artists' videotapes to cable stations and public television.
- ★The Sonnabend Gallery in New York presents an exhibition of "Neo-Geo" art, including artists Jeff Koons, Peter Halley, and Ashley Bickerton, all of whom have previously presented work at Hallwalls.
- ★A coalition of WNY media artists creates Squeaky Wheel, a.k.a. Buffalo Media Resources, providing community access to film and video equipment.
- ★The National Association of Artists' Organizations holds its fourth national conference at Hallwalls and CEPA, featuring presentations by artists, curators and administrators, including The Guerrilla Girls, Amalia Mesa-Bains, William Olander, Suzanne Lacy, Pat Oleszko, and Fletcher Mackey, among others.

EXHIBITIONS

Group shows include *Poetic Resemblance* (guest curator: Barbara Broughel), with Alan Belcher, Mike Kelley, Chris Burden, Stephen Frailey, Ashley Bickerton, McDermott & McGough, and Barbara Bloom, among others; *Metabody* (guest curator: Bradley Eros), with TODT, Joseph Nechvatal, Stelarc, & Alex Grey, among others; and *Uplifted Atmospheres, Borrowed Taste* (guest curator: Howard Halle), with Peter Nagy, Dennis Adams, Ann Doran, and others. Solo exhibitions feature David Cabrera, Mike Osterhaut, Polly Apfelbaum, and Curtiss Mitchell. Other exhibiting artists include Andy Yoder, Gordon Voisey, Elizabeth Gemperlein, Kaspar Linder, and Alfonso Volo.

PERFORMANCE

Visiting performers include Pat Oleszko (*Where Fools Russian, or War 'n' Piece*), Charles Dennis, and Lenora Champagne. Special presentations include further installments of the *Hal Barber Show*, the first annual "Rock and Roll Babylon" concert by local bands, "The 4:59 Show" of works under five minutes long, and "Sensory Overload," featuring performances under two and a half minutes long, with decor by the Red Hots. Other performers include Tony Billoni, Public Domain, Jim Reddin, and William Mondlak.

MUSIC

Performers include Phill Niblock (presenting a film and music installation) Michael McCandless (as part of the Composers Perspective Concert Series), the Buffalo New Music Ensemble, and others.

FILM

The publication and exhibition series *Picture This* invites 22 visual artists (including John Baldessari, Barbara Bloom, Barbara Broughel, Jennifer Bolande, Jim Casebere, Andrea Fraser, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Robert Longo, John Magglio, & Peter Nagy) to write about a film of their choosing. Visiting filmmakers include Ross McElwee (*Sherman's March*), Ericka Beckman (*Cinderella*), Lynne Tillman & Sheila McLaughlin (*Committed*), Robert Rayher, Leslie Thornton, and Lizzie Borden. The media/performance component of *Metabody* includes works by Kurt Kren, Peter Kubelka, Erotic Psyche (Aline Mare), and Kembra Phaler.

VIDEO

The Medicine Show presents tapes by Stuart Marshall, Catherine Elwes, Leticia Parente, and others; *Pittsburgh Film and Video: Images for a Future Nostalgia* (guest curator: Margie Strosser) includes work by Tony Buba, Susan Gillis, Tom Megalis, and others; *Site-ing the Almighty: Religion and Media* features work by Linda Montano, Armin Heurich, Donna Kapa, Ken Rowe, and others. Other videomakers appearing in person include Dan Graham, Dale Hoyt, Daniel Klepper, and Vera Body. Hallwalls' editing suite is constructed, providing artists access to video post-production equipment.

LITERATURE

Writers presented include Cynthia Brown Dwyer and Elaine Rollwagen Chamberlain (reading from journals of their experiences in Iran and Central America), Peter Cherches (with music by Lee Feldman), Barry Yourgrau, Reinaldo Povod, Joel Rose, Lynne Tillman, and others. Nancy Peskin edits *Angle of Repose*, a collection of stories originally read by their authors during the 1983-84 season.

•The "Iran-Contra" hearings are televised, investigating the illegal diversion of US funds to Iran in exchange for the release of hostages and arms for Nicaraguan contras.

•The New York Stock Market crashes on "Black Monday," provoking widespread speculation that "the '80s are over."

•Michael Musto's cover story in *The Village Voice* declares "The Death of Downtown" and the end of the club scene of the late '70s and early '80s.

•The FDA licenses the antidepressant Prozac.

•Widely publicized sex scandals rock the ministries of Jim Bakker and (the following year) Jimmy Swaggart. Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed form the Christian Coalition.

•Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* becomes a best-seller.

•The first chapter of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) forms in New York. From the beginning, the group incorporates video camcorder activism, performance art, image appropriation, and post-modern critical theory in its responses to the AIDS epidemic.

•Surrogate mother Mary Beth Whitehead is denied custody of "Baby M."

•The Supreme Court's Hardwick decision declares that states have the right to outlaw private sexual acts between consenting adults. An estimated half-million gay men, lesbians, and their supporters march on Washington in the largest gay rights demonstration to date. (The evening before the march, women from the East Village lesbian performance space WOW Cafe play to a packed house at Hallwalls.)

•Andy Warhol dies; the flood of film and visual art retrospectives, posthumously released diaries, and the auction of items from his estate inspire renewed interest in and reevaluation of his work. His will stipulates the formation of a foundation for the visual arts.

•Vincent Van Gogh's *Irises* is auctioned for \$53.9 million.

•Christine Tebes becomes Hallwalls' Executive Director; Alan Sondheim is named Artistic Director.

SEPTEMBER

LOTTO

AS METAPHOR

SEPTEMBER 18 - OCTOBER 30, 1987

VIDEO VIEWING ROOM

Liquid-plumr

YOU NEED THE POWER

AUDIENCE AS PROTAGONIST: GETTING INTO THE PICTURE

GUEST CURATOR:
ROBERT LONGO

This show is a random sampling of works that have emerged out of the borders of capitalism and commodification in the art world. For most of the artists in the show, I believe that many of their works will continue, grow, and continue to contribute important works in the larger picture.

Rather than lumping them all together, or packaging them under one simple aesthetic, a creative diversity in the work represents a coexistence in contemporary vision and life. It establishes a relationship between artist, work, it is an essentially self-contained work in itself but the demand of time.

The spirit behind this show is to give an opportunity to view works that are aggressive, thoughtful and generally have no cinder.

— Robert Longo

HALLWALLS

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

EXHIBITIONS

Group shows include *Reanimators*, featuring Henry Jesionka, Steve Barry, and Dean McNeil; *Floating Values*, a multi-disciplinary survey of work on sexuality and gender (with the Buscaglia-Castellani Art Gallery of Niagara Falls, NY) featuring Andres Serrano, Janet Cooling, David Wojnarowicz, Ida Applebroog, Jedd Garet, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Adrian Piper, and others; *Revelations* (guest curator: Carl Hazlewood), with Kathy Muehleman, Juan Boza, and others; *Lotto As Metaphor* (guest curator: Robert Longo), with Seth Tobocman, Cliff Wang, Jem Cohen, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and others, accompanied by a special issue of the hand-made *Symbol Magazine*; *The Spiral of Artificiality* (guest curators: Paul Laster & Renee Riccardi), with Ellen Carey, Christian Boltanski, Nancy Burson, Vera Lehndorff & Holger Trulzsch, Allan McCollum, Mark Morrisroe, and others; and exchange shows with YYZ (Toronto) and Spaces (Cleveland). Solo exhibitions feature artists M.R. Clark, Barry Gray, Paul Claude Gardere, and Rafael Sanchez.

PERFORMANCE

Performers include Karen Finley, Ann Carlson, Mark Anderson, David Cale, Yoshiko Chuma and the School of Hard Knocks, Ishmael Houston-Jones and Yvonne Meier (at the Langston Hughes Institute), Gayle Tufts (with musicians Jane Scarpantoni, Lois DiLivio, Michael Huber, Thom Huber, Sean Mackowiak, and others), and Fiona Templeton. Hallwalls' contribution to the city-wide "Hi, This is Judy: Women Making and Becoming Art" festival includes an evening of work from New York's WOW Cafe (guest curator: Lori E. Seid) with Holly Hughes, Carmelita Tropicana, Lisa Kron, Kate Stafford, Karen Crumley, and Sharon Jane Smith. Robert Longo's guest-curated exhibition includes a performance by Kevin Carter and Vicki Alexander. Scott B and Joseph Nechvatil present the world premiere of *Not A Door*, featuring Richard Edson and Mark Boone, Jr. The annual Visiting Directors Series of residencies debuts with a work by James Bergeron. The annual Members Show includes a Members Marathon of live work for the first time, and the first monthly "Performance Hockey" jam session takes place.

MUSIC

Performers include John Bacon Jr. (with Multi-Jazz Dimensions), conductor/composer Bruce Penner, The String Trio of New York, Jim Staley and John Zorn, the State University of Sao Paulo Percussion Ensemble, Greg Piontek, Tom Guralnick with Marion Brandis, Curlew, and Tony Conrad (*Early Minimalism*). The North American New Music Festival features performances by Philip Glass, John Cage, Vivian Fine, David Moss, and others.

FILM

Coco Fusco is invited to curate the series *Reviewing Histories: Selections from New Latin American Cinema* and edit an accompanying publication, presenting the work of directors Fernando Solanas, Tomas Gutierrez Alea, Susana Munoz and Lourdes Portillo, Raul Ruiz, and others. Derek Jarman, The Brothers Quay, and Beth and Scott B receive multi-part retrospectives. *Indie 500* features Western New York filmmakers Michael Hamilton, Ken Rowe, Mark Frischman, John Dombrowski, Carmine Einfinger, Jon R. Hand, Patty Wallace, Donald Brennan, Jam Yafai, Rachel X. Weissman, Eric Jensen, Biff Henrich, and others, as well as a screening by New York-based filmmaker Lewis Klahr. Other visiting artists include Richard Kern and Christine Choy.

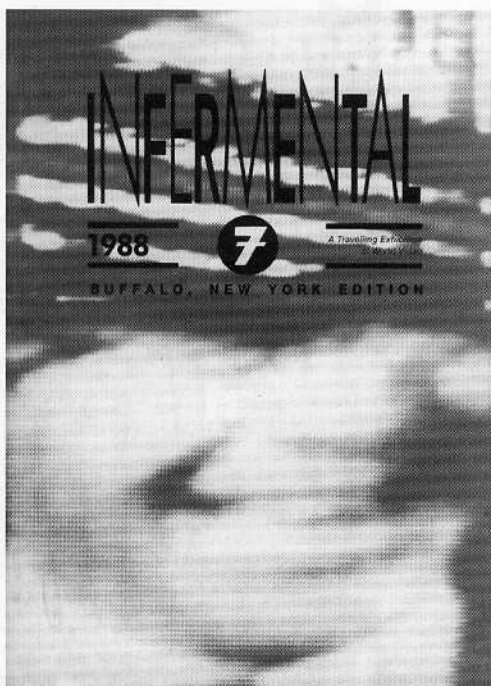
VIDEO

Visiting artists include David Blair, John Adams, Dan Walworth and Ahmed Damjan, Robert Horvitz, Jon Bewley (showing work from Newcastle, England's Projects UK), Annie Goldson & Carlos Pavam (TV *Sandino: Television from Nicaragua*), and Steve Fagin. Video Viewing Room series include *Video/Audio/Imbroglio* (guest curators: Louis Mang and Paul Dickinson, with works by Ted Conrad, Mark Freeland, Bob Kotas, Bill Manspeaker, Scott Sweeney, & others; presented at both Hallwalls and The Continental); *Distant Airwaves: New Television from Europe* (guest curator: Barbara Osborne, with tapes by Jean-Luc Godard, Gustav Hamos, and others); *Audience As Protagonist: Getting into the Picture* (including tapes by Joan Braderman, Brian Springer, William Wegman, Marc Huestis & Wendy Dallas, and others), and *Family Extensions* (with work by Armin Heurich, Tony Oursler, and others). *Floating Values* includes tapes by Vito Acconci, Valie Export, Richard Fung, Alan Sondheim & Kathy Acker, Julie Zando, Martha Rosler, Phyllis Christopher, Vivienne Dick, Cecelia Condit, Chris Hill, and others.

LITERATURE

Readings by Jamaica Kincaid, Ariel Dorfman, Glenn O'Brien, Janice Eidus, Jill Ciment, Rachel Salazar, Judy Lopatin, M. Kasper, Ron Kolm, Jeffrey DeShell, Nicolette de Cispkay, Alan Bigelow, Jane Brakhage, and others. Manuel Ramos Otero and Alberto O. Capps read in Spanish at La Palma de Oro, accompanied by English translator Gregory Kolovakos. Edmund Cardoni edits the first issue of the anthology *Blatant Artifice*, featuring writers who have read at Hallwalls in the previous season.

1988



★ George Bush is elected President; during his campaign he calls for "a thousand points of light" (i.e., private charitable donations in lieu of government funding for social services).

★ Medical waste and other refuse washes up on the shores of beaches throughout the summer.

★ 60 percent of all American households now own a VCR; 52 percent have cable television.

★ Western New York toy company Fisher-Price introduces the PXL 2000, an inexpensive camcorder for children. The product fails and is soon taken off the market, but not before pixelvision becomes a tool for video artists, including many working in Buffalo.

★ Upstate New York abortion opponent Randall Terry forms Operation Rescue.

★ Tom Mulready creates the Cleveland Performance Art Festival, which becomes an annual event, featuring periodic appearances by Western New York artists associated with Hallwalls, including Fritz Bacher and the Ladies of the Lake.

★ The rap group Public Enemy records the album *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*.

★ The independent label Sub Pop Records evolves as an outgrowth of a Seattle-based zine; by 1994 the label's sales will reach an estimated \$7 million.

★ *Sassy* magazine begins publication. Targeted at teenaged girls, it contains coverage of political issues and the burgeoning "alternative" scene alongside more standard fashion advice.

★ The Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University presents "Media Buff.," a gallery exhibition and screening series focusing on artists and projects associated with Hallwalls, Squeaky Wheel, and Media Study Buffalo.

EXHIBITIONS

Solo exhibitions include major new interdisciplinary installations by Barbara Bloom (*Esprit de l'Escalier*), Ericka Beckman, John Jesurun (*Ojo Caliente*), and Tony Labat; a Mike Glier retrospective; and shows by Peter Stephens, Chuck Agro, Brian Nichols, and Kurt Von Voetsch. Other artists presented include Rob Danielson & Terese Agnew (*Salvage Lounge*), Chris Howard, Joy Episalla, and MollyOlga Neighborhood Art Classes. Group shows include *Skin*, the first members show with a theme; *Double Vision* (guest curator: Fred Wilson), with Richard Ramirez Armijo, Emily Cheng, Tyrone Mitchell, Howardina Pindell, and others.

PERFORMANCE

Visiting artists include Dancenoise, Alien Comic, Robbie McCauley (*Indian Blood*), Darius James (*Negrophobia*), Miss Molly and the Passions, Nigel Rolfe, and a second sampling of work from WOW Cafe in conjunction with the First International Women Playwrights Conference. The Visiting Directors Series presents three weeks of workshops with Fiona Templeton, culminating in a performance improvisation, *The Hypothetical Third Person*. Performers in the first biannual *Ways in Being Gay* festival include Holly Hughes, Alice B. Theatre, Ronald Ehrike, Other Countries, Reno, and Tim Miller. Hallwalls becomes a regional site for the NEA's Interarts Regional Regrant Program. The "First Thursday" series debuts, spotlighting Buffalo performers.

MUSIC

Performers include Anna Rubin and Myrna Schloss, Neil Rolnick, The Maelstrom Percussion Ensemble, and others. *The New York State New Music Network Tour*, co-produced by Hallwalls, features the Kronos Quartet, Max Roach, Henry Threadgill, Women of the Calabash, and others. *The North American New Music Festival* includes Elliot Carter, Jon Gibson, Ben Neill, the East Buffalo Media Association, and others.

FILM

Coco Fusco organizes *Young, British & Black*, a film series and accompanying monograph on the work of Black Audio Film Collective and Sankofa Film/Video Collective. Visiting artists include Su Friedrich, Jon Moritsugu, Ela Troyano, Raymond Red, Lewis Klahr, and Todd Haynes, Christine Vachon and Barry Ellsworth of Apparatus Productions. Series include *Selections from New German Cinema*, *A Tribute To Third World Newsreel*, *Traces of Difference: New British Avant Garde Film*, *Black Women Independent Filmmakers*, and *New German Super-8* (presented by Jürgen Brüning).

VIDEO

Presentations include the premiere of the Buffalo edition of *Infermental 7*, a traveling international media exhibition compiled by Hallwalls, featuring 58 artists; *Politics of Information*; *Centripetal Force* (with Kevin McMahon, Mindy Faber, and others); *Milwaukee: Mysteries, Media, and Madness*; and screenings by Tony Labat and George Kuchar. A "video production jam session" generates hours of raw footage by community artists. *Artwaves*, Hallwalls' cable access series, debuts.

LITERATURE

Holly Hughes is Hallwalls' first writer-in-residence, in conjunction with the *Ways In* festival, which also includes readings by C. Carr, Eileen Myles, Bruce Benderson, Dennis Cooper, Sarah Schulman, and others. Other visiting writers include Oscar Hijuelos, Gloria Naylor, Charles Johnson, Clarence Major, and Grace Paley; Latin American writers Yolanda Blanco, Ana Lydia Vega, Victor Montejo, Jaime Manrique, and others present bilingual readings. Edmund Cardoni edits *Blatant Artifice 2/3*, a double issue also including writing by visiting performance artists.

• Pro-democracy demonstrations gather momentum in China, only to be violently suppressed by the government. Live TV feed by Ted Turner's CNN cable network offers viewers an unprecedented degree of coverage. (The following year, artist Shu Lea Cheang will incorporate this material, along with footage shot by camcorder activists, in an installation as part of Hallwalls' first "Video Witnesses" festival.)

• The opening and subsequent destruction of the Berlin Wall becomes the most visible evidence of widespread, ground-shaking change in political regimes throughout Eastern Europe.

• Ayatollah Khomeini declares the novel *The Satanic Verses* blasphemous and calls for the death of its author, Salman Rushdie, and the book's publishers.

• The US Supreme Court rules that individual states may limit access to abortion, sparking pro-choice demonstrations throughout the country. The Court also rules that burning the flag is protected by the First Amendment.

• The US invades Panama.

• The Valdez, a US oil tanker, spills 11 million tons of gas off the coast of Alaska.

• 147,000 cases of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and related disorders are reported in the U.S.

• The exhibition *Les Magiciens de la terre* opens at the Pompidou Center in Paris, prompting controversy within the art world about the motives and implications of "multiculturalism."

• Greil Marcus' book *Lipstick Traces* and a traveling retrospective bring renewed attention to the Situationists.

• Audio artists Negativland release *Helter Stupid*.

• Spike Lee directs *Do the Right Thing*.

• On the floor of the Senate, New York Senator Alfonse d'Amato destroys an exhibition catalogue featuring the photographs of Andres Serrano. The fate of the NEA is debated in both the House and Senate; the final appropriations bill includes an amendment declaring that funds are not to be used to "promote, disseminate, or produce" materials that may be considered "obscene, including but not limited to depictions of sado-masochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts which, when taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political, or artistic value." President Bush names John Frohnmayr chairman of the agency.

• Bowing to political pressure, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC cancels an exhibition of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe; the show subsequently opens at the alternative space WPA.

• Tim Miller and Linda Burnham co-found Highways in Santa Monica, CA.

• The New York-based group Visual AIDS (co-ordinated by one-time Hallwalls director Patrick O'Connell) organizes the first annual "Day Without Art" on December 1, an international day of action and mourning to end the AIDS crisis. Hallwalls participates by staging a die-in on Main Street downtown and a marathon evening of screenings, readings, and performances.

• Massive civil disobedience begins in Allegany County, NY in response to plans to build a proposed radioactive waste facility.

• The Walden Galleria, Buffalo's newest and largest upscale shopping mall, opens in Cheektowaga, NY.

BAY•ARE A•CONCE PTUALISM :TWO•GEN ERATIONS

Bay Area Conceptualism catalogue. Guest curator: Nayland Blake.

EXHIBITIONS

Group shows include *Bay Area Conceptualism: Two Generations* (guest curator: Nayland Blake), with Terry Fox, Tom Marioni, Paul Kos, David Dashiell, David Ireland, Lutz Bacher, Jon Winet and Margaret Crane, among others; *Nepotism* (guest curator: Mike Osterhaut), with Alex Grey, Carlo McCormick, Karen Finley, David Herskovits, Les Levine, Luis Frangella, and others; *Amerikarma* (guest curator: Dan Levine), with Jessica Diamond, Raymond Pettibon, Cady Noland, and others; *Literacy on the Table* (a collaboration with the Bronx Council on the Arts/Longwood Arts Project at P.S. 39 and Franklin Furnace; guest curators: Argumental), with Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Betti-Sue Hertz, Anne Turyn, Yong Soon Min, and others; and *Vulgar Realism*, with Kathe Burkhart, Carter Hodgkin, Susan Tallman, and others. Solo presentations include installations by Pat Oleszko (*Humor's The Oddity*), Eric Jensen, and Paul Dickinson and others. Hallwalls publishes *Satisfaction*, an artist's book by Mike Glier.

PERFORMANCE

World premieres by Ann Carlson and Mark Anderson (*Secret*) and Pat Oleszko (*Humor's The Oddity*). Visiting performers include Frank Moore, Flying Words Project, Holly's Comets, Lenin Limbo, Andy Soma, and the Church of the Little Green Man (in conjunction with *Nepotism*); Buffalo-based artists include Fritz Bacher (*Vornil*), Cat Ash, Heather Connor, Rosemary Lyons, Laurel Hecht, David Kane and David Butler, Michael Huber, and others. Hallwalls' contribution to the downtown Theater District's annual "Curtain Up" festival is a 25-hour-long performance, music, and movie marathon.

MUSIC

Performers include Lester Bowie, the Rova Saxophone Quartet, Trans Museq, Pappy Martin and the Love Supreme Jazz Ensemble, The MC Band, and others. *The North American New Music Festival* features Robert Ashley, Anthony Davis, Aki Takahashi, the California E.A.R. Unit, and others.

FILM

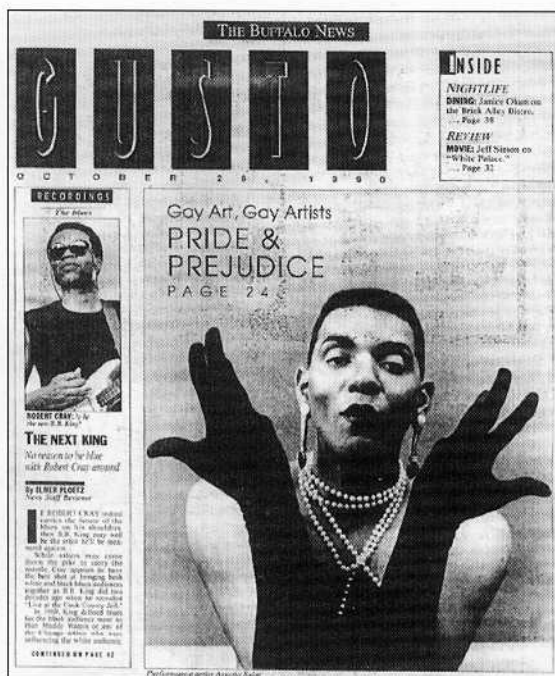
The book & screening series *Berlin: Images in Progress* features work by Michael Brynntrup, Penelope Buitenhuis, Michael Krause, and Katarina Peters. The series also includes a cabaret at Toronto's Music Gallery with performances by Tony Billoni, Chemical Nº5, and Candyland Productions. Other visiting artists include Lynda Williams, Barbara Hammer, Jerry Tartaglia, Tony Buba, Penelope Wehrli, and Alte Kinder. Special series include *Red* (documentaries from the U.S.S.R.) and *Blue* (documentaries from the U.S.); *Looking East: Asian Films on American Screens*; *S-8 X-C: Super-8 Films from Across the Country*; *Queasy Stomachs*, *Tender Groins* (guest curator: Jonathan Pollard); *New Israeli Cinema*; and *Canada is Bigger than the U.S.*

VIDEO

Screenings by Peter Callas, Louis Hock, Rotraut Pape, Leslie Thornton, and others. Special presentations include installations by Grahame Weinbren and Roberta Friedman (*The Erl King*) and Brian Springer (*Viewing Baby from the Blimp*). *The Politics and Poetics of Feminism, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* features work by Chris Hill, Martha Rosler, Kate Horsfield and Ellen Spiro, Laura Kipnis, and others; Richard Wicka presents *Video from the Home of the Future*; *Bad Acting: Performing and Characterization on Screen*, is guest curated by Sara Diamond and Gary Kippins; and *Fauna of Mirrors* looks at video journals. Peter Weibel presents three nights of lectures and screenings; Russian artist Afrika and Miran Mohar of the collective Irwin talk on "New Art Movements in Yugoslavia & the U.S.S.R."

LITERATURE

Readings by Raymond Federman, William T. Vollman, Cornelius Eady, Peter Matthiessen, Catherine Liu, Fred Wah, N. Regina Jackson, Akua Kamau, Stuart Ross, Gary Earl Ross, and others. Bilingual readings by Latino writers Ed Vega, Cecilia Vicuña, Dionisio Cañas, and others. *A Forum on Contemporary African Literature* features panelists from the People's Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Zaire, and the Ivory Coast.



Assoto Saint, featured artist in an Oct. 26, 1990 *Buffalo News* *Gusto* cover story on the Ways In Being Gay festival.

NEA Chairman John Frohnmeyer rescinds grants originally awarded to Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, Karen Finley (all of whom have presented work earlier in their careers at Hallwalls) and John Fleck. The National Campaign for Freedom of Expression is created in Washington, DC. Dennis Barrie, director of the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, is charged with violating obscenity laws when the Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective opens; he is subsequently acquitted. David Wojnarowicz sues the American Family Association for using unauthorized excerpts from his work in its campaign against the NEA; he wins the case and is awarded one dollar. Karen Finley's show at Franklin Furnace is attacked by columnists Evans and Novak; Franklin Furnace is shut down by the fire department.

Judith Butler publishes *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

Congress agrees to use federal tax dollars to bail out bankrupt savings and loan associations around the country.

The Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, The New Museum, and the Studio Museum in Harlem join forces to present *The Decade Show*, a multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural survey of the art of the 1980s.

One-time independent filmmaker David Lynch's series *Twin Peaks* debuts on prime-time television. *America's Funniest Home Videos* offers cash prizes for camcorder video clips.

U.S. women earn an average of 67 cents for every dollar earned by men doing comparable work.

Members of the band Bikini Kill publish a two-page manifesto called "Revolution Girl-Style Now," sometimes cited as the beginning of the "riot grrrl" movement.

Buffalo native Ani DiFranco creates her own independent record label and releases the first of an ongoing series of albums, building a following on the alternative rock and folk circuits.

The 8mm News Collective, a group of Buffalo media activists, begins meeting and producing tapes providing an alternative to mainstream media.

Artpark cancels a scheduled performance by Survival Research Laboratories due to controversial content; 18 Western New York artists are arrested at a demonstration protesting the cancellation.

A Western New York chapter of ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) forms; the group rents Hallwalls' gallery space for its weekly meetings for nearly three years.

Buffalo Artvoice, a free bi-weekly newspaper, begins coverage of cultural events in Western New York.

EXHIBITIONS

Group exhibitions include *A Question of Paint*, with John Zinsser, Byron Kim, Nancy Haynes, James Siena, Carl Ostendarp, and others; *Insect Politics* (guest curator: Stephen Derrickson), with Dennis Adams, Aimee Rankin, Sally Mann, Tim Rollins & KOS, Alfredo Jaar, and others; *Viral Infection* (the visual art component of *Ways In Being Gay*), with Matthew Barney, Elizabeth Berdand, Brian Goldfarb, Simon Leung, TODT and others; and *Disconsolate Revelations*, with Joel Peter Johnson, Mindy Tousley, and others. Solo installations are presented by Charles Long, Jon Tower, Hunter Reynolds, Lynn Devlin, Laura Kikauka, Nancy Barton and Michael Glass, Rosemary Lyons, Katrin Jurati, and others.

PERFORMANCE

Robbie McCauley creates *The Buffalo Project* with a cast of performers drawn primarily from Ujima Theatre Company. *A Night at Dixon Place*, curated and hosted by Ellie Covan, features Linda Mancini and Doug Skinner; Tony Oursler and Constance DeJong collaborate on *Relatives*; and Public Doberman presents *Ellon John: The Rock Opera*. Other performers include the V-Girls, Dale Worsley and Power Boothe (*Ringer Pike*), Mary Ramsey, the Wallmen, House o' Pork, Hank Hyena, Vanessa Jones (a site-specific performance at the semi-abandoned Trico Building which would later become Hallwalls' third home), Melissa Ragona, David Butler and David Kane, The Nancy Sinatras, Homer Jackson, Terry Klein, Washboard Jungle, the Ladies of the Lake, Anne Moss, Robin Tressler and Marten Clibbens, Kate Licata, Ron Fechter, and others. *Ways In* performers include David Wojnarowicz and Ben Neill, the Washington Sisters, Mactown Strip, Kate Bornstein (with Justin Bond and Sydney Erskine), the High Risk Group, and many others.

MUSIC

Dick Higgins, Jackson MacLow, Petr Kotik, Ben Neill, & the SEM Ensemble collaborate on a "Spoken Music" performance. Benny Carter and the Max Roach Quartet present concerts. The 8th North American New Music Festival features Sun Ra, LaMonte Young, Sound Pressure, Aki Takahashi, Gordon Monahan, and others.

FILM

In-person screenings by Christine Vachon, Paul Sharits, Larry Fessenden, Francis James, Uzi Parnes, the German collective Alte Kinder, Greg Klymkw of the Winnipeg Film Group, Klaus Telscher, Dirk De Bruyn, Peggy Ahwesh, Brad Wales, and others. Ulrike Ottinger is the subject of a touring retrospective. Series include *Downtown Depression*, *Suburban Horror* (a film festival combining artists' works and commercial productions about Buffalo) and *Faktor Film* (a multi-disciplinary, international series featuring Jo Andres, Ellen Fisher, Magita Haberland & Hartmut Jahn, and others). *Ways In* includes a series curated by Miki Onodera, plus presentations by Jack Waters, Susie Bright, Al Lirog, Tom Waugh, and Richard Fung.

VIDEO

20 members of the Austrian collective Stadtwerkstatt create a week of live television broadcasts on BCAM. During a later residency, drag queen media activists Brenda Sexual and Glenda Orgasm (aka Duncan Elliott and Glenn Belverio) stage a kiss-in at City Hall and attempt to interview Mayor Griffin. Artists screening work include Kathy High, Marion Ware & Sylvie Poirier, Steve Fagin, and Julie Zando. *Video Witnesses: A Festival of New Journalism* is presented for the first time, including an installation by Shu Lea Cheang. Other series include *Feeling the Faults: Confronting Dis-Ease Through the Mediated Body* (tapes by Gay Men's Health Crisis, John Goss, Tom Rubnitz, Ellen Spiro, and others); *Labor Intensive* (guest curators: Rob Danielson & Bob Hercules); and *Lines of Flight: (mostly) west coast video* (a component of *Ways In* guest curated by Liz Kotz. Paul Dickinson compiles *Put Down Your Pencil*, a cassette anthology of appropriated audio work by such artists as the Tape Beatles, Luigi Bob Drake, Tiny Kingdom, and the Christian industrial band Blackhouse. The cut "Penis and Testicles Dance Party" receives airplay on several non-commercial radio stations.

LITERATURE

Readings by Mark Leyner, Catherine Texier, Luis Francia, Ninotchka Rosca, Nicole Urdang, George F. Johnson, Jr., and others. *Ways In* features readings by Tom Spanbauer, Madeline Davis & Liz Kennedy, Assoto Saint, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Essex Hemphill. The ongoing bilingual series *Café Teatro* (coordinated by Zonya Rivera) features writers David Ortiz Angleró, Dawn Jordan, and others. A *Samuel Beckett Birthday Tribute* on Good Friday features Raymond Federman, Chris O'Neill, Stela Ghete, and others.

★ A failed attempt to depose Mikhail Gorbachev signals the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of Boris Yeltsin.

★ War breaks out in the Middle East after Iraq invades Kuwait. The opening day of the Gulf War is broadcast live on television; a press blackout follows. Widespread international protests to U.S. involvement in the military action receive scant coverage in America.

★ President Bush decries "political correctness" during a speech at the University of Michigan.

★ The cross-generational commercial success of the band Nirvana and the signing of countless "indie rock" groups to major labels leads many to label this "The Year Punk Broke." The first Lollapalooza tour brings "alternative" music acts and cultural phenomena (including body modification, transgressive performance art, and digital art) to cities across North America. Meanwhile, 50 bands participate in the week-long International Pop Underground Convention in Olympia, WA.

★ Douglas Coupland publishes *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*.

★ Billy Bragg records "Cindy of a Thousand Lives," a song inspired by the photography of Cindy Sherman.

★ The first multimedia personal computers are developed.

★ George Holliday's footage of the Rodney King beating, shown repeatedly on national newscasts, brings nationwide attention to police brutality (and to the phenomenon of "video witnessing"). The tape is later included in the Whitney Biennial.

★ The Court TV network debuts.

★ The Independent Television Service (ITVS) is created.

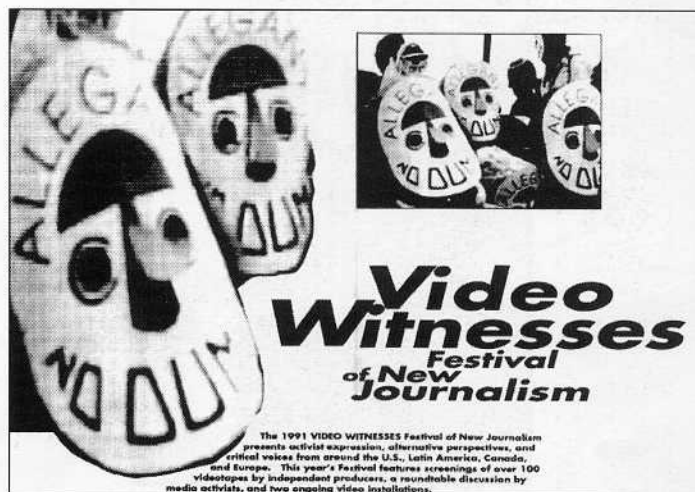
★ The U.S. Navy "Tailhook" scandal brings to light sexual misconduct in the military.

★ Anita Hill's televised testimony during the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas brings national attention to the issue of sexual harassment.

★ Susan Faludi publishes *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*.

★ Edmund Cardoni becomes Executive Director of Hallwalls.

★ A funding crisis forces Hallwalls to shut its doors and lay off its staff for more than two months. The organization sends out a blank monthly calendar to dramatize its predicament, resulting in both contributions and national publicity.



EXHIBITIONS

Fluxatitudes (guest curators: Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood) combines period works by such Fluxus artists as Alison Knowles, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, and Nam June Paik with contemporary works by John Dagg, Brian Eno, Martin Kippenberger, Cady Noland, Laura Stein, and others; the installation of the show is a performance orchestrated by Rirkrit Tiravanija. Other group exhibitions include *Library of Babel* (guest curator: Todd Alden), featuring Nayland Blake, John Boskovich, David Carrino, Maria Porges, and others; and *Pleasure* (guest curator: Steven Salzmann), featuring Sean Landers, Marilyn Minter, John Torreano, and others. Project Room artists include Patricia Thornley, Stephen Schofield, and Charles Clough. *South=North=South* is a month-long residency project by Border Art Workshop/Taller de Fronterizo incorporating workshops and performances at migrant labor camps in the Finger Lakes region, plus an exhibition and other events in Buffalo.

PERFORMANCE

Visiting artists include Michael Kaniecki (performing at a post-modern polka party co-sponsored by the Polish Community Center), David Leslie, Lambs Eat Ivy, David Greenberger, K Nectiv, Mary Freed, and Frank Green. A benefit event pairs a return visit by Holly Hughes with a presentation by First Amendment lawyer H. Louis Sirkin. *I Saw It On TV*, a post-Gulf War interdisciplinary marathon, explores political speech as a performance form with work by Andrew Deutsch, Fritz Bacher, Brian Springer, Aaron Lercher, Anne Moss, and others. First Thursday performers include Roger Bourdeau and Nick Pietrocchio, Jennifer Thomas, Maria Venuto, Susan Slack, and others.

MUSIC

The New Jazz Network tour (co-produced by NYSCA and Hallwalls) brings Sun Ra, Don Cherry, Geri Allen, Jerry Gonzalez, Dewey Redman, Craig Harris, and Lenny Pickett to 5 cities across New York state. *The North American New Music Festival* features John Cage, Robert Black, Christian Wolf, and others. Other performers include the Greg Millar Ensemble, Minton/Turner, Willem Breuker Kollektief, and the SUNY Buffalo Percussion Department. Don Metz, John Bacon Jr., and Rey Scott found the New Jazz Orchestra of Buffalo, Hallwalls' resident ensemble.

FILM

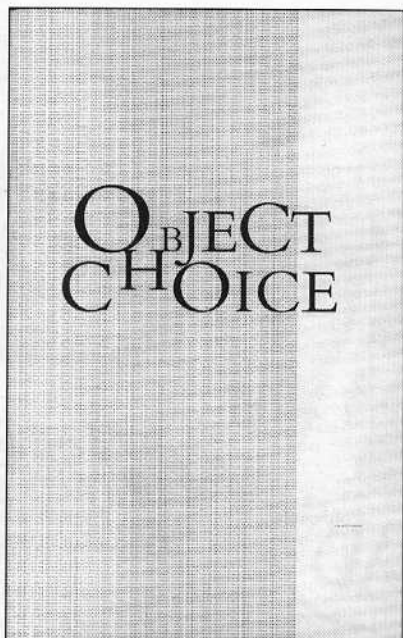
Directors Charles Burnett, Kidlat Tahimik, Harun Farocki, Linda Feesy, Craig Baldwin, Guy Maddin and screenwriters George Toles & Arturo Arias present screenings. Albert Gabriel Nigrin shows work from the U.S. Super 8 Film Festival, Brian Goldberg exhibits films from Drift Distribution, and Matthias Tritzner introduces the work of the German collective Die Fahre. Paul Sharits presents the first public screening of "Figment I: Fluxgram Voyage in Search of the Real Maciunas" (1977/86). *Kino Polski* (co-sponsored with the Polish Community Center) includes an appearance by director Richard Bugajski; *The Outrage Festival* (cosponsored by the UB Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alliance) features films by Derek Jarman, Pratibha Parmar, and others.

VIDEO

Artists screening work include Sadie Benning, DeeDee Halleck, Mary Patierno, Laura McGough, Lou Mang, and others. *Video Witnesses 1991* features work by Barbara Trent, Annie Goldson and Chris Bratton, Jim Hartel, the Gulf Crisis TV Project, Buffalo Artists Against Repression & Censorship, Allegany County Nonviolent Action Group, and others.

LITERATURE

Hallwalls cosponsors a reading by Arturo Arias and serves as a site for the UB Comparative Literature department's national *Homotexualities* conference, which includes presentations by Diana Fuss, Wayne Koestenbaum, Lee Edelman, and many others.



Object Choice catalogue. Guest curators: Ken Gonzales Day and Andrew Perchuk.

- * International activists and government leaders attend the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro.
- * Vice President Dan Quayle denounces "the cultural elite;" *Newsweek* subsequently publishes a list of 100 people with "one eye on your wallet, the other on your soul."
- * Patrick Buchanan and other speakers at the Republican National Convention denounce public funding for the arts and the "gay agenda."
- * A national pro-choice demonstration in Washington draws a record 750,000 participants.
- * Bill Clinton is elected President.
- * Widespread riots in Los Angeles (and, closer to home, in Toronto) follow the "not guilty" verdict in the trial of four white police officers charged with beating Rodney King.
- * *Factsheet Five* founder Mike Gunderloy, writing in *The World of 'Zines: A Guide to the Independent Magazine Revolution*, estimates that there are currently 10,000 self-published 'zines in the United States alone.
- * Former video curator Kathy High begins publication of *Felix: A Journal of Media Arts and Communication*.
- * Declaring a "Spring of Life," Operation Rescue stages protests at women's clinics and doctors' homes (with an open invitation from Mayor Griffin), sparking large-scale counter-demonstrations organized by Buffalo United for Choice and other groups.
- * Buffalo Parks Commissioner Robert Delano is convicted of racketeering and other federal offenses following a three-year scandal.
- * The independent theater company Buffalo United Artists begins presenting plays in various locations throughout the city, including Hallwalls; their popular production of Tom Wilson Weinberg's *Ten Percent Revue* during *Ways In* 1992 marks the first time an outside group mounts an extended run at Hallwalls.
- * Buffalo Cable Access Media (BCAM) opens its doors after two years of planning and negotiations with the city. Many media artists closely involved with Hallwalls play crucial roles in developing the public access organization, including video curator Chris Hill, who serves as its Board of Directors' first president.

EXHIBITIONS

The Abortion Project (guest curators: Kathe Burkhart and Chrysanne Stathacos) incorporates work by 48 artists, including Roberley Bell, Sue Coe, Rebecca Howland, and Clarissa Sligh; *Sculpture* features Patrick Robideau, James Agard, Donna Cameron, and Cynthia Kaufman Rose; *The 2nd Skin* features Janine Antoni, Nicole Carstens, Alberto Rey, and others; *Object Choice* (the visual art component of *Ways In Being Gay*; guest curators: Ken Gonzales Day & Andrew Perchuk) features Cary S. Liebowitz, Marlene McCarty, Larry Clark, Jeanne Dunning, and others. The program also sponsors installations by Karen Finley (*Written in Sand*), Robert Morrissey, Robert Clark, Pat Bacon & Nancy Ghermer, Anne Wayson & Courtney Egan, and others.

PERFORMANCE

Karen Finley's benefit performance of *A Certain Level of Denial* brings nearly 1000 people to Rockwell Hall. *Ways In* performers include John Kelly, Leah Zicari, Arjay Baker, and Vern Bodkin. Other artists include James Godwin, Rae C. Wright and Mr. Tim, John S. Hall, Catherine Harrison (with KayLynn Raschke and Lisa Farmer), Mitzi Standard, and Matt McElligott. Two large-scale projects which will become annual events debut this year: *Tattoo You!* (in conjunction with a UB English Department graduate student conference) and a women's drag show (in its first year: a benefit for ACT UP/WNY and Worker's World party called *Passing Fancy* with a lecture by Leslie Feinberg).

MUSIC

Performers include the David Murray Octet, Paul Elwood, the New Jazz Orchestra of Buffalo, Michael Colquhoun, and others. The *North American New Music Festival* features the James Emery Trio, Kevin Volans, Earle Brown, and Edgar Curtis, and others.

FILM

Filmmakers presenting screenings include Craig Baldwin, Roddy Bogawa, Alex Steyermark, Donna Cameron, Jay Rosenblatt, Pia Cseri-Briones, Stephan Sachs, Wilhelm Hein and Annette Frick. *The Hallwalls Western New York Film Tour* brings work by Steve Bartoo, Todd Bellanca, and others to cinemas throughout the U.S. and Europe. *Visible Women* (in conjunction with the Langston Hughes Institute and Squeaky Wheel) features media work by Julie Dash, Lynne Sachs, and others; the annual *Outrage Festival* (co-sponsored by UB's LGBTQ) includes work by Terence Davies; Maria Beatty & Annie Sprinkle, *Testing the Limits*, Ron Peck, and others. The popular extended run of Todd Haynes' *Poison* leads to greater emphasis on programming independent features.

VIDEO

Make Room for More Voices, a video component of *The Abortion Project*, includes a series of tapes by first-time media makers using Hallwalls' facilities. *Video Witnesses 3: Networking in the Nineties*, includes a video installation by Julia Scher; presentations by Jeff Mann, David Shulman, Marta Maktar and Marie-Helene Cousineau, and representatives of Not Channel Zero; plus the debuts of the Media Coalition for Reproductive Rights' *Spring of Lies* and Kevin Rafferty and James Ridgeway's *Feed* (with footage gathered by Brian Springer). Other artists screening their work include Ken Feingold, Ursula Purrer, Dennis Day, and Richard Wicka and Ronald Ehmke (*Snap Judgments*).

LITERATURE

The Native American Writers Series includes Diane Glancy, Laura Tohe, and Barry Bush. *Ways In* includes readings by Leslie Feinberg, Connie Fife, and Joe Dale Tate Nevaquaya.

• An anti-abortion activist shoots and kills Dr. David Gunn outside a Florida clinic.

• An April March on Washington draws an estimated 500,000 gay people and supporters.

• Hillary Clinton heads an ultimately unsuccessful campaign to create a national health care program.

• Research indicates that 7.6 million people work at home during normal business hours.

• *Wired*, a magazine devoted to electronic culture, begins publication.

• Mayor Griffin announces he will not run for reelection. Democratic candidate Anthony Masiello is elected.

• Buffalo hosts the World University Games and a corresponding cultural festival, for which Hallwalls is a primary site. The international athletic event leaves a mass of unpaid bills in its wake.

1993



EXHIBITIONS

Group exhibitions include *Cities on the Edge*, with Endi Poskovic, Natalie Olanick, Kurt Von Voetsch, and others; *Will You Go Out With Me?*, with Chuck Agro, Stavits Allweiss, Janet Lundeen, Lorna Mills, and others; and *White Men in Suits*, with Barbara Bullock, Kelly McFadden, and others. Solo installations are presented by Tom Huff, Peter Levinson, James Allen, Nicholas Arbatsky, Diane Bush, and candio; a site-specific series at the offices of Planned Parenthood features work by Nancy J. Parisi, Savannah, Yolanda Daliz, and others.

PERFORMANCE

Beyond Ginger: a celebration of women performers features live performances by Judith Jackson, Masani Alexis DeVeaux, Meg Knowles, Content Knowles, Dancenoise (*Year of the Woman*), Susan Burns, and Elizabeth Burns; a discussion and concert by local musicians, including Gretchen Schulz, the Jazzabels, Michel Weber, Katie Miller, and others, moderated by Suzanne Colligan; and a reading room of zines made by women. Other featured artists include William Pope L., Flying Words Project, Dennis Downey, Brian Keith Jackson, and Michele Costa. Several thematic open-call events are held, including "In My Room: Readings from Journals & Private Correspondence," a *Star Trek*-themed fundraiser, and alternative celebrations of Mother's Day and Clinton's Inauguration.

MUSIC

A jazz & blues series in conjunction with the International Cultural Festival includes concerts by Lester Bowie, Al Tinney, Delfayo Marsalis, Buckwheat Zydeco, and Don Pullen, plus a commissioned work by John Zorn. The annual *North American New Music Festival* features Ned Rorem, Stephen Drury, Percussive Rotterdam, and more. Other featured performers include Robert Dick, Bandmental, Kirk Brundage, Multi-Jazz Dimensions, the Willie Dorsey Band, Matt Nixon & the Blues Men, the Danny Lynn Wilson Band, David Wolf, the New Jazz Orchestra of Buffalo, and the Buffalo Academy for Visual & Performing Arts Jazz Ensemble, plus a multi-media event by Douglas Cohen and Lawrence Brose.

FILM

Off the Track: Independent Film from Around the World (part of the International Cultural Festival) includes features from Austria, Mongolia, Israel, South Africa, Japan, South Korea, China, and Mexico, many of which have never been seen in the U.S. Other series: *Kino Polski II* (with the Polish Community Center), *Skin Flicks* (guest curator: Gail Mentlik), and the annual Outrage Festival (with screenings of *Silverlake Life*, *Claire of the Moon*, and the premiere of Mark D'Auria's *Smoke*). Paul and Menno De Nooijer and Peter Sempel introduce short retrospectives of their work. Feature films receiving extended runs include *Deep Blues*, *The Medicine Wheel Animation Festival, 1991: The Year Punk Broke*, *Barefoot Gen*, and *Manufacturing Consent*.

VIDEO

The video component of the International Cultural Festival includes work from Africa, the Northwest territories of Canada, and Latin America; a survey of Eastern European television (curators: Keiko Sei and Chris Hill); and an installation by Steina Vasulka. Other series include *The Visual Politics of Hip-Hop*, *New Sex Video*, and *Tactical T.V.* Artists presenting screenings include Portia Cobb, Judit Kopper, Kevin O'Shaughnessy, and others; Melissa Scott creates an installation in the Viewing Room. A panel discussion on the future of the "information superhighway" includes DeeDee Halleck, Nolan Bowie, Councilman James Pitts, and others.

LITERATURE

Writing from the New Coast, co-sponsored by various departments and organizations at SUNY Buffalo, features readings by Liz Was, Miekal And, John Byrum, Jena Osman, Andrew Levy, Elizabeth Willis, Peter Gizzi, Bill Tuttle, and others. Piotr Parlej reads during First Thursday.



Don Metz (on ladder) during construction of Hallwalls' third home.

- *Events across the world, including marches and a rally in New York City, mark the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. An estimated 1000 artists present work during the Cultural Festival of the Gay Games in New York, although only a small portion of them are officially produced or endorsed by the festival.

- *Former Buffalo Bills quarterback O. J. Simpson, charged with murder, leads police on a crosstown chase which is watched live on television by 93 million people.

- *A "Republican Revolution" finds Newt Gingrich as Speaker of the House, George Pataki as governor of New York, and a "Contract with America" claiming to promote widespread economic reform.

- *Dance critic Arlene Croce publishes "Discussing the Undiscussable," an essay attacking what she calls "victim art," in the *New Yorker*.

- *Radio personalities Howard Stern and Rush Limbaugh publish best-selling books.

- *Controversy surrounding a performance by Ron Athey in Minneapolis brings renewed attacks on the NEA; similar attacks on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting are provoked by the screening of an adaptation of Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City* on PBS.

- *UB's Center for the Arts, comprising two galleries, three theaters, and several screening rooms, opens at SUNY Buffalo's suburban campus. The university's Media Study, Art, and Theater departments—three of the last liberal arts departments to leave the Main Street campus within the city limits of Buffalo—are now housed under one roof.

- *Hag Theatre, a Buffalo-based lesbian company, stages its first production.

- *Hallwalls moves to the Tri-Main Building (formerly the Trico Windshield Wiper factory) at 2495 Main Street and begins construction of a new complex, incorporating a gallery, cinema, black box theater, video library, editing room, and viewing room designed by Buffalo architect Catherine Faust. CEPA remains at 700 Main and expands into the space formerly occupied by Hallwalls.

EXHIBITIONS

The first season in the new gallery includes installations by Willie Birch, Jonas Dos Santos, and Heidi Kumao. *Consuming Passions: Food, Art, Culture* (a collaboration with the Castellani Art Museum, Niagara University) includes work by Michael Bramwell, Millie Chen, Biff Henrich, Marion Faller, Jolene Rickard, Andy Yoder, and others. The exhibition component of *Ways In Being Gay* consists of the group show *Amendments* (with work by Jo Ann Brenner, Dyke Action Machine, Kenneth Sean Golden, Joy Episalla, and others), an installation by Andy Fabo and Michael Balser, and photographs by Carol Speser and the late Richard Roeller. Hallwalls joins forces with the Pyramid Arts Center (Rochester, NY) and the Wayne County Council for the Arts (Lyons, NY) to initiate the Artists Residency Exchange: Western New York.

PERFORMANCE

Cabaret events at the Central Park Grill in advance of Hallwalls' reopening include work by Paul Elwood, Ben Friedlander, John Harrigan, Cynthia Kimball, Craig Klose, Nick Lawrence, Elizabeth Licata, Jenny Miller, Dan Rigney, and Rey Scott, among others. *Ways In* includes performances by Holly Hughes (*Clit Notes*) and Ronald Ehmke (*Not for Profit*), plus three productions by Buffalo United Artists. Other visiting artists include Todd Alcott and Gordon Simpson. Two popular regular events, *Tattoo You!* and the annual Artists & Models Affair, become fundraisers involving large numbers of participating artists.

MUSIC

Events include a tribute to the late Yvar Mikhashoff; concerts by the String Trio of New York, Elliot Sharp, and 8 Bold Souls; plus a series of live performances simulcast on WBFO.

FILM

Visiting artists include D.A. Pennebaker, Rosa von Praunheim, Monika Treut, and Lynne Fernie. Series include *Contemporary Silent Classics* (guest curator: René Broussard), *First Person Stories* (guest curator: Gail Mentlik), and *Controlling Interests* (featuring two presentations by Rick Prelinger). Several independent features, including *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*, receive extended runs.

VIDEO

The program salutes the industrial legacy of its new home with *Building on Labor*, a series guest-curated by Annie Ferguson which leads to the formation of the "Labor Squad," a group of camcorder documentary makers. A residency by Beth Trimarco of Dyke TV during *Ways In* similarly inspires a local Dyke TV chapter. Other video components of *Ways In* include screenings of tapes by Ghen Dennis, Cyrille Phipps and Catherine Saalfeld, a documentary on the annual Dykes Do Drag event, and a video retrospective of the first 4 years of ACT UP/WNY. Other artists presented during the season include Margie Strosser, Don Bernier, and Jody Lafond (a mid-career retrospective).

LITERATURE

Ways In brings Dorothy Allison, Alan Bérubé (introducing the film adaptation of his book *Coming Out Under Fire*), and a reading organized by Paula Paradise featuring A.M. Allcott, Elizabeth Kennedy, Masani Alexis Deveaux, Ross Hewitt, and others. Events presented in conjunction with UB include readings by Aaron Shurin and David Levi Strauss, plus a *Festival of New Fiction* with Chris Mazza, Mark Amerika, Ron Sukenick, and others.

★ Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated.

★ The bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City draws attention to right-wing militia groups in the U.S. Later in the year, the actions of government law enforcement agents in Waco, Texas and Ruby Ridge, Colorado are investigated.

★ The "Million Man March" draws record numbers of African American men to a demonstration in Washington, D.C.

★ The trial of O. J. Simpson ends with a "not guilty" verdict after a year of massive news coverage and public discussion.

★ Robert Longo makes his Hollywood directorial debut with *Johnny Mnemonic*, based on a short story by William Gibson.

★ The National Endowment for the Arts is all but totally dismantled, with specific support for visual artists organizations and media arts centers eliminated for 1996-97.

★ At-Large Common Council member Barbara Kavanaugh becomes the first out lesbian elected to local office.

★ AM&A's, the last department store in downtown Buffalo, closes.

★ More than a dozen coffeehouses, many of them offering live music, readings, performances, and screenings, operate throughout the area.

★ A format change by one of Buffalo's commercial hard rock stations means that the city now receives signals from 4 different "alternative" radio stations.



EXHIBITIONS

The organization marks its second decade with *Alternatives: 20 Years of Contemporary Art at Hallwalls*, a retrospective curated by Elizabeth Licata and Sara Kellner at the Burchfield-Penney Arts Center of Buffalo State College, plus new installations by Pat Oleszko and Homer Jackson at Hallwalls. Later exhibitions include shows by Laylah Ali, Christopher Giglio, Janet Henry, Eli Langer, Daniella Dooling, and Kathy Gaye Shiroki, and the MollyOlga 35th Anniversary show. As part of the citywide *Visions of Empowerment* festival, the Exhibitions program sponsors a guest-curated exhibition by Deborah Weeks Carson entitled *Acts of Courage: The Visible Art of African-American Women*.

PERFORMANCE

Laurie Anderson returns to present *The Nerve Bible* to Hallwalls' largest single audience ever at UB's Center for the Arts (co-sponsored by Iconcerts and FM-101 The Planet). Tony Billoni and Tony Conrad mark the 20th anniversary with a new collaboration. Visiting artists include Homer Jackson, Fiona Templeton, and Sharon Fogarty. A Thursday Cabaret series presents local musicians, including Rainbow Girls, Phonkbutt, Jamie Kubala, Girlopo, and milf. Among the Buffalo performers producing extended runs of shows in Hallwalls' new Black and Blue Theater are Ronald Ehmke (*Not for Profit*), Theatre for Change (Emanuel Fried's *The Dodo Bird*), Hag Theatre (Arthur Kopit's *Chamber Music*, 4 Plays by Carolyn Gage), and Buffalo Ensemble Theatre (Richard Lambert's *Brooklyn Boys*).

MUSIC

Performers include Bobby Previte, Steve Lacey and Irene Aebi, Gerry Eastman, Eric Watson/John Lindberg Duo, Michael Colquhoun, Los Caribes, and Jan Williams with Eberhard Blum and Art Lange.

FILM

Keith Sanborn marks the grand opening of the Paul Sharits Film & Video Theater with a performance and a screening of 4 of Sharits' films. Visiting filmmakers include Carl Brown, Michael Snow, Lynne Fernie, Shu Lea Cheang, Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz, Orgone Cinema, and Yann Beauvais. Other events include the third *Kino Polskie* festival, a 10-year retrospective of animation by Terry Klein, *Evil Surprises: New, Independent, & Canadian* (guest curator: Gail Mentlik, with works by Michael Hoolboom, Gariné Torossian, Mina Shum, and others), an outdoor summer series at the Calumet Arts Cafe, and M. Faust's *Mondo Movie Night*.

VIDEO

Vito Acconci contributes the design for a new Video Viewing Room. Artists presenting work include Steina Vasulka, Igor Vamos of the Barbie Liberation Organization, Brian Springer (*Spiral*), Virocode (Andrea Mancuso and Peter D'Auria), and Richard Wicka and Ronald Ehmke (the 100th episode of *Snap Judgments*).

LITERATURE

Just Buffalo Literary Center begins holding its readings at Hallwalls and moves its offices to the Tri-Main Center. The two organizations, and many others, collaborate on *Visions of Empowerment*, a series focusing on literature, art, dance, and media by women of color. Writers in the series appearing at Hallwalls include Jewelle Gomez, Lucille Clifton and Gale Jackson.

**ALTERNATIVES:
20 YEARS OF HALLWALLS CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER, 1975-95
at the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo State College
April 8 - June 18, 1995**

CATALOGUE ESSAY BY ELIZABETH LICATA

Alternatives is a good name for this exhibition. Histories are creative acts, not objective recordings, and they take shape through choosing which paths to explore and which to leave for another time. Before creating this retrospective, we had to admit that at least one path was not open to us: the option of transposing a 20-year explosion of multi-disciplinary programming into a tastefully compatible display of objects. The first group exhibition of the Hallwalls' founding artists was called *Noise*—this is also a "noisy" exhibition, both literally and metaphorically. *Alternatives* is not an attempt to tell the whole story of Hallwalls, nor is it an effort to boil that story down into one theoretical paradigm. The importance of Hallwalls lies in the geographical and cultural connections that have been forged, in the boundaries of media and genre that have been dissolved, in the cross-institutional collaborations that have been encouraged, and, above all, in the artists who have been supported. The degree to which these imperatives can be exhibited is, at best, limited.

Through presenting works from almost 100 artists and projects, this exhibition works within those limitations. It traces the development of Hallwalls' exhibition programming from the original founders and their influences through six succeeding generations of curators, starting with work by one of the first visitors to Essex Street in 1975, Michael Snow, and winding up with the work of Heidi Kumao—exhibited in 1994 in Hallwalls' new headquarters. It was difficult narrowing things down, and some rather arbitrary choices had to be made from the rich menu of over 5,000 artists that have passed through Hallwalls' portals. Buffalo media artist Tony Conrad says that the founders ordered up visiting artists like so many pizzas, and, indeed, the group of artists in this show are like a "dream team" of most of the artists we've admired since first encountering contemporary art.

In addition to many works actually exhibited at Hallwalls, *Alternatives* features representative works by artists who gave talks and workshops, objects by artists who showed film or video, and "alternative" choices by artists whose Hallwalls-era work was not available. Two video monitors within the exhibition show a necessarily limited selection—edited by Squeaky Wheel director Cheryl Jackson—of archival documentation of performances, readings, and talks by a wide range of artists. (Because of the delicate state of the pre-1986 videos, we could only use documentation from the last 9 years.) Michael Basinski of the Poetry/Rare Books Collection at The University at Buffalo has put together a wall of static documentation such as photographs, posters, and invitations from the Poetry Room archives.

As a collaborative process, *Alternatives* goes far beyond the

initial teaming of curators from Hallwalls, the Castellani Art Museum, and the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Each former Hallwalls exhibitions curator was interviewed about programming strategies and asked for suggestions of important artists to include. G. Roger Denson's recollections of the revelatory impact of seeing Dennis Oppenheim's first Artpark installation led to our inclusion of the "Identity Stretch" documentation. Charlie Clough's anecdote about picking up Linda Benglis at the airport in Gary Judkin's "hippie van" is an unseen subtext to her work here; a Sol Lewitt diagram is the only record of his installation in one of Charlie's first *Approaching Painting* shows. The famous Jonathan Borofsky moose—preserved on a hunk of plaster from Essex Street—deteriorated over the years and finally disappeared, but photodocumentation of it is included, and a different Borofsky wall drawing takes its place. All of the curators of the early years emphasized the collaborations with the Albright-Knox (usually citing the *Four by Three* series of Hallwalls/CEPA/Albright-Knox projects, although there were many other collaborations), so early work is included from *Four By Three* artists Jennifer Bartlett, John Baldessari, and David Salle, as well as work from the Rafael Ferrar and Cynthia Carlson collaborative exhibitions.

The curators of the 80s—Claudia Gould, Robin Dodds, and Catherine Howe—brought their own distinctive philosophies to the program. As New Yorkers, Gould and Dodds were more apt to tap emerging artists from the flourishing scene springing up in the East Village and other non-mainstream locales. A number of Collaborative Projects artists from the Gould years—Christy Rupp, Joseph Nechvatal, Rebecca Howland, and Jane Dickson—are included in the exhibition as well as work from the original *Up With People* 1982 Colab residency. Robin Dodds also brought in a series of exciting group shows, mainly featuring New York artists. Not only did her exhibitions introduce the work of artists like Jeff Koons and Louise Lawler to Western New York, but she also showed this work in intriguing conceptual contexts, indicating where the work was coming from and where it might be going. Dodds programmed important solo installations of artists such as Group Material, TODT, and Robin Winters, who are included in this exhibition.

During Catherine Howe's tenure, Hallwalls sponsored a groundbreaking series of NEA-funded guest-curated and Interarts-sponsored exhibitions (the Interarts program encouraged collaborations between programs). These included a solo project by artist Barbara Bloom, *L'Esprit d'Escalier*, which later won a prize at the Venice Biennale; the infamous *Nepotism* and *Metabody* group shows; and a series of shows that introduced the work of artists of color such as Rafael Sanchez, Howardina

Pindell, and Paul Gardère. Bloom, Sanchez, and Gardère are included in this show, as well as many other artists whose work might never have been seen if not for Howe's essential understanding of the importance of working with artists rather than prioritizing curatorial authority.

Charles Wright ushered in the 90's by programming a series of exhibitions that focused on art historical and theoretical politics, including *A Question of Paint*, *Fluxattitudes*, and *The Library of Babel*. *Fluxattitudes* traveled to the New Museum of Contemporary Art, while *A Question of Paint* acted as a forerunner for a renewed interest in strategies of abstraction. Taking a different tack, current exhibitions curator Sara Kellner expanded Hallwalls programming for so-called "regional" artists, spotlighting the work of Western New York and Southern Ontario artists Robert Morrissey, Millie Chen, Tom Huff, and Endi Poskovic, among many other artists who have since been widely exhibited nationally. Like every Hallwalls curator before her, Kellner also programmed exhibitions exploring sociopolitical topics such as reproductive rights, gender constructs, and capitalist hierarchies. Works by Kathe Burkhart and Chrysanthe Stathacos, co-curators of the controversial *Abortion Project*, are included here as well as many other artists—Heidi Kumao, Willie Birch, Shelley Niro, and Cary Liebowitz, to name a few—from Hallwalls' most recent history.

Finally, it must be recognized that most of the founders and curators of Hallwalls were artists. Work is included from founders, administrators, "co-conspirators," and curators

Diane Bertolo, Charles Clough, Tony Conrad, G. Roger Denson, Nancy Dwyer, Biff Henrich, Kathy High, Catherine Howe, Barbara Lattanzi, Robert Longo, Larry Lundy, John Maggiotto, Kevin Noble, Cindy Sherman, Anne Turyn, and Michael Zwack. They all make for a most impressive checklist, but not nearly as impressive or as diverse as the labyrinth of "histories" surrounding them.

Viewers should look closely at the exhibition labels in this show. Through providing background information about artists' participation in Hallwalls programming, the labels demonstrate the limitations of pigeonholing by media or discipline. Many artists—like Tony Oursler and David Wojnarowicz—visited the space several times, showing videos, giving a reading, performing, or participating in an exhibition, depending on the forms of expression they were involved in at the time. Also on the labels, the names of the lenders tell a story of continued support and recognition for the cultural contribution Hallwalls has made in Western New York. The Western New York institutions and collectors who have lent works to this show include the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Burchfield-Penney Art Center of Buffalo State College, the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Alyssa Anthone, Cecile and Steven Biltekoff, Dr. and Mrs. Armand Castellani, Maria and Robert Gallant, Fern and Joel Levin, Don and Camille Metz, and anonymous lenders. These organizations and individuals were not just passive signers of a loan form: each had their own remembrances and their own versions of the Hallwalls story.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

1. Acconci, Vito, "Bite the Bullet: Slow Guns for Quick Sale (To Be Etched On Your American Mind)," 1977, photo etching, 28 1/2" x 39 1/2". Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani.
2. Agro, Chuck, "Dad," 1993, acrylic and resin on wood, 8 1/4" x 8 1/4" x 1 7/8". Collection of Maria and Robert Gallant.
3. Allen, James, portion of "Bag Lady" sequence from *I Am Poor, I Am Hungry*, 1992-3, acrylic on canvas, 67" x 53 1/2". Collection of the artist.
4. Applebroog, Ida, "Stop Crying," 1981, ink and rhoplex on vellum, 15 3/4" x 66 3/4" x 2 1/4". Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.
5. Baldessari, John, "Orange, Green, Purple, Yellow, Red, Blue," 1976, 6 lithographs, 18 3/4" x 24 1/2" each. Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. Gift of James and Danielle Sotet, 1983.
6. Bartlett, Jennifer, "Black 6" Squares Series #9," 1972, enamel, silkscreen, baked enamel, steel plates, 8 units, 103" x 12" overall. Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.
7. Bell, Roberley, *Abortion Project* installation, 1992, mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.
8. Bender, Gretchen, Untitled, from the series "The Pleasure is Back," 1982, photo on sign tin, 19" x 21". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani.
9. Benglis, Lynda, "Lapniappe I," 1978, cast paper, acrylic, gold leaf and glitter, edition 26/ AP, 36" x 11 1/2" x 5". Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. Evelyn Rumsey Cary Fund, 1981.
10. Bertolo, Diane, "Vignette," 1981, mixed media on plywood, 22" x 26". Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY.
11. Birch, Willie, "For Alex Haley," 1993, acrylic, papier mâché, 21" x 20" x 12.5". Courtesy of Luise Ross Gallery, New York.
12. Bloom, Barbara, "Propaganda Posters for Belief: Beacons," 1987, photolithograph, 31 3/4" x 23 3/4" each. Courtesy of Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York.
13. Bloom, Barbara, "Propaganda Poster for Belief: Monotheism," 1987, photolithograph, 31 3/4" x 23 3/4". Courtesy of Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York.

14. Bloom, Barbara, "Propaganda Posters for Belief: Stairway to Heaven," 1987, photolithograph, 31 3/4" x 23 3/4". Courtesy of Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York.
15. Borofsky, Jonathan, "I Dreamed that Blacks Were Marching to Freedom and One Girl Said She Would Tell the Truth at 2,187,315," c.1972, wall drawing, dimensions variable. Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.
16. Bullock, Barbara, "Taster's Choice," 1993, oil on canvas, 48" x 24". Collection of the artist.
17. Burkhart, Kathe, "Snatch," 1993, acrylic and mixed media, 66" x 66". Courtesy of the artist.
18. Carey, Ellen, Untitled, "White Series," 1978, 2 black and white photographs, selenium toned, with inks, 16" x 20" each. Collection Cecile and Steven Biltekoff.
19. Carlson, Cynthia, "Untitled (#2) Study from the Monuments Series," 1984, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 83" x 107". Collection of the artist.
20. Clough, Charles, "Fallen Angels," c.1975, collage, 36" x 28". Private Collection, Buffalo, NY.
21. Clough, Charles and Berlow, Sheldon, Untitled, c. 1982, enamel on photographs, 14 1/4" x 107". Private Collection, Buffalo, NY.
22. Clough, Charles, "Elance," 1993, enamel on masonite, 20 1/2" x 24 7/8". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand Castellani.
23. Clough, Charles, "Pro Positus," 1993, enamel on masonite, 30" x 22". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani.
24. Clough, Charles, "Holotricha," 1992, enamel on masonite, 24" x 31 3/4". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand Castellani.
25. Coe, Sue, "There is No God But Allah," 1985, mixed media on paper, 27" x 30". Courtesy private collection, Gallerie St. Etienne, NY.
26. Colab, photodocumentation of *Up With People*, 1982, dimensions variable. Collection of Alan Moore.
27. Conrad, Tony, from "Two at Once," 1979, acrylic on canvas with slide projection, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.
28. Crane, Margaret and Jon Winet, "Pulp Fiction," 1994, photograph, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artists.
29. Denson, G. Roger, "L'Epistemologie d' Rimbaud (I Know the Evening)," 1978-79, oil on canvas w/ string and dowels, painting measures 90" x 39". Collection of Douglas G. Schultz.
30. Dickson, Jane, "Daddy," 1990, Oil on canvas, 36" x 54". Collection of Brooke Alexander, New York.
31. Dwyer, Nancy, "Censored: Boss Attack," 1983, aluminum, vinyl and lacquered board, 43 1/8" x 51 1/4" x 2". Collection of Cecile and Steven Biltekoff.
32. Ferrar, Rafael, "Yo, Yo, Yo, Yo, Yo," 1975, mixed media, 105" x 106". Private collection. Courtesy of Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York.
33. Finley, Karen, "I shot myself because I love you. If I loved myself I'd be shooting you," 1994, 72" x 36", mixed media on paper. Courtesy of Lipton Owens, Inc.
34. Fischl, Eric, "The Birthday Party," 1980, oil on glassine, 69" x 76". Courtesy of the artist.
35. Frampton, Hollis, "ADSVMVS, ABSVMVS," 1982, 2 ekta-color photographs, 8" x 10" each. Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Gift of Marion Faller, 1993.
36. Gardère, Paul, "Staring Ahead, Looking Back," 1993, soil, acrylic, plexiglas, rope, drawings, 72" x 24". Collection of the artist.
37. Glier, Mike, "Satisfaction" series, 1989, charcoal on paper, 6 units each measuring 12 1/2" x 9 1/4". Collection of the artist.
38. Goldstein, Jack, "A Faster Run," "Three Felled Trees," "The Tornado," "The Burning Forest," "The Dying Wind," "Two Wrestling Cats," 1976, 45 rpm records, 7" diameter each. Collection of Josh Baer, NYC.
39. Golub, Leon, "Solzhenitsyn," 1976, oil on canvas, 24 1/2" x 32 1/2". Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.
40. Group Material, detail of "MASS," 1985, mixed media, dimensions variable. Collection of the artists.
41. Henrich, Biff, Untitled, 1984, 2 ekta-color photographs mounted on foamcore, 84" x 30" each. Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Purchase, 1989.
42. High, Kathy, "Sugar and Salt," 1983, b/w photograph with marker, 55 3/8" x 41". Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Gift of Gary Nickard and Patty Wallace in honor of Margaret Viola Nickard, 1989.
43. Howe, Catherine, "Black Sun," n.d., oil on canvas, 56 3/4" x 68". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand Castellani.
44. Howland, Rebecca, "Toxicological Tablecloth," 1984-85, silkscreen on linen with handpainting, edition of 8, 96" x 96". Collection of the artist.
45. Howland, Rebecca, "Love Canal Potato," 1980, cast plaster with rolling eye, 5" x 3" x 2". Collection of the artist.

46. Huff, Tom, "Tonto's Revenge Dance Party," 1992, mixed media, 54" x 24" x 28". Courtesy of the artist.
47. Kelley, Mike, "Horror of the Vacuum (Forest/Safety, The Dalinian Landscape/Fear, The Spot Syndrome/The Figure in the Landscape is Analogous to Neurotic Child's Drawing)," 1984, 96" x 96". Courtesy of Metro Pictures.
48. Kumao, Heidi, "Tied: A Duet," 1993, mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.
49. Lattanzi, Barbara, "The Life of the Party," 1983, multimedia installation. Collection of the artist.
50. Leibowitz, Cary S., Raffle installation, 1995. Courtesy of the artist.
51. Levine, Dan, Untitled works from *A Question of Paint*, acrylic on cotton, 2 panels each 12" x 12", 1 panel 12 7/8" x 13 3/4". Collection of the artist.
52. Lewitt, Sol, "Drawing for Hallwalls Exhibition," 1977, graphite on glassine, 14" x 16". Collection of Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center.
53. Lewitt, Sol, Untitled, 1970, etching with hand mirror, 10" x 10". Collection of Fern and Joel Levin.
54. Longo, Robert, Untitled, 1990, paint, wood, stainless steel, 45" x 46 3/8" x 5 5/8". Private collection, Buffalo, NY.
55. Longo, Robert, "Untitled (Cowboy)," 1977, charcoal on paper, 31" x 40 3/4". Collection of Alyssa Anthone.
56. Longo, Robert, "Untitled (Rick)" from *Men in the Cities* series, 1981-87, ink, charcoal and graphite on paper, 40 1/2" x 30". Collection of Cecile and Steven Billekoff.
57. Lundy, Larry, "Urban Animation," 1978, mixed media, 35 1/2" x 26 1/2". Collection of Charlotta and Petr Kotik.
58. Maggiotto, John, "Not a Real Place," 1984, polaroid prints, 20" x 20". Private collection, Buffalo, NY.
59. Maggiotto, John, "Bagdad, Last Night," 1992, plaster, 45" x 31". Courtesy of the artist.
60. Mesches, Arnold, "The Anatomy Clinic," 1984, acrylic on canvas, 80 1/4" x 96". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani.
61. Morrissey, Robert, "Lazarus," 1993, wood, twine and magnets, 16" x 75" x 7". Courtesy of Bill Bace Gallery.
62. Mullican, Matt, "Untitled (Bulletin Board Installation)," 1973-1992, 96" x 48" x 4". Courtesy of Barbara Gladstone Gallery.
63. Nauman, Bruce, "Studies for Holograms," 1970, 5 screen-prints, 29 1/8" x 29 1/8" each. Courtesy Sperone Westwater.
64. Nechvatal, Joseph, "Ghosts of Love," 1983, graphite on paper, 12" x 16". Collection of the artist.
65. Nickard, Gary, from *Lightworks* project, 1995, photographs, 2 units 8" x 10" each. Courtesy of the artist.
66. Niro, Shelley, "Red Heels Hard," 1991, hand-colored photographs, 12 1/4" x 68 1/4". Collection of the Castellani Art Museum, Niagara University, Castellani Purchase Fund.
67. Noble, Kevin, "Dublin 1972," 1992, oil on canvas, 36" x 48". Collection of the artist.
68. Oppenheim, Dennis, "Identity Stretch," 1970-75, hand-stamped topographic map, museum board, color and black and white photographs, 2 panels, 60" x 80" total. Collection of the artist.
69. Oursler, Tony, "Violent Flowers," 1994, video projector, VCR, videotape, tripod, light stand, silk flowers, dimensions variable. Collection of Cecile and Steven Billekoff.
70. Piccillo, Joseph, "Study," 1981, charcoal on paper, 30" x 40". Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Armand Castellani, 1988.
71. Poskovic, Endi, "Altar Crux Series: Homage to Joseph K. and Joseph B.," 1995, mixed media installation, 24" x 36". Courtesy of the artist.
72. Rollins, Tim and KOS, "Amerika: Two Drawings," 1988, gold and silver paint on book pages, 15 1/8" x 19 1/2". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani.
73. Rosen, Ann, Untitled, 1975, photo and hand-drawn lithograph, 26 1/4" x 25 1/4". Collection of the Castellani Art Museum, Niagara University. Gift of Mr. Savino Nanula.
74. Rupp, Christy, "Trickle Down," 1988, steel and paint, 66" x 28" x 25". Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Purchase, 1990.
75. Salle, David, Untitled, 1981, acrylic on paper, 57 1/2" x 75". Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani.
76. Sanchez, Rafael, "El Oro, Haiti, Vietnam, Somalia," 1987, enamel on leather, 70" x 36". Collection of the artist.
77. Serrano, Andres, "Meat Weapon," 1984, cibachrome, silicone, plexiglass, ed. 2/10, 27 1/2" x 40". Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.
78. Sharits, Paul, "Untitled Frozen Film Frames," c. 1975, film strips and plexiglas, 30" x 75". Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Gift of Christopher and Cheri Sharits, 1995.
79. Sherman, Cindy, "Series of Character movements—Faeries," 1976, photocollage, 15 1/4" x 31 1/4". Collection of the Castellani Art Museum, Niagara University. Gift of Mr. Savino Nanula.

80. Sherman, Cindy, *Untitled*, 1994, cibachrome, 76" x 51". Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures.
81. Simonds, Charles, *Installation view of Ritual Cairns at Artpark*, 1974, C-Print, 19" x 21 1/2". Collection of Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. Gift of Linda L. Cathcart in honor of Seymour H. Knox, 1991.
82. Snow, Michael, "Of a Ladder," 1971, 10 black and white photographs, 13 1/2" x 20" each. Collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Sherman S. Jewett Fund, 1973.
83. Stathacos, Chrysanne, "Baby Hair Candle Dress," 1992, printed hair and roses on silk with candle, 12" x 36" x 36". Collection of the artist.
84. Stephens, Peter, from *Romance and Adventure* series: "Victory," 1987, enamel on canvas, 84" x 66". Courtesy of the artist.
85. Topolski, Andrew, "40 Ground," 1992, mixed media, 24 3/4" x 21 3/4". Collection of Fern and Joel Levin.
86. TODT, "Barrel Lift I," 1992, mixed media, 45" x 45 1/2" x 33". Courtesy of Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati, and the artists.
87. Toth, John, "Gatefold," 1980, mixed media, 48" x 48" x 36". Collection of Don and Camille Metz.
88. Turyn, Ann, from *Top Stories*, 1979-1984, laser prints, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.
89. Wallace, Patty, from *Lightworks* project, 1995, 2 photoliths, 20" x 24" each. Courtesy of the artist.
90. Winters, Robin, "Leaving the Cloister," 1991, oil on canvas, 45" x 33 3/4". Courtesy of Brooke Alexander, New York.
91. Wojnarowicz, David, "Jean Genet Masturbating in Metteray Prison," n.d., silkscreen on poster, 34" x 25". Courtesy of P.P.O.W. and the estate of David Wojnarowicz.
92. Zwack, Michael, "History of the World," 1982, pigment and oil on paper on canvas, 32" x 21". Collection of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. Collector's Club Fund, 1990.
93. Zwack, Michael, "History of the World," 1993, mixed media, 47" x 70". Courtesy of Curt Marcus Gallery.

FUNDERS

This book was created in conjunction with *Alternatives: 20 Years of Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, 1975-1995*, a collaborative project of the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, Buffalo State College, and Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center. The publication and exhibition have been made possible with grants from the Museum Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; the Lannan Foundation; Independent Health; the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts; the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County's Decentralization/County Initiative Program; M & T Bank; and the Yvar Mikhashoff Memorial Fund. Additional support was generously provided by the Anderson Gallery; Artobjects Unlimited, Inc.; Ashford Hollow Foundation; Anthony Bannon; Sheldon and Mary Berlow; Cecile and Steven Biltekoff; Bob Budin; the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University; Donna Jordan Dusel; Marion Faller; Peter C. Flickinger; Tyrone Georgiou and Janey L. Levy; George Hasiotis/Antoinette's Sweets, Inc.; Duayne and Mary Hatchett; Irving and Betty Korn; Fern and Joel Levin; The Marks Family Foundation; Kenneth Peterson; R. D. Pohl; Walter A. Prochownik; Calvin and Patricia Rand; James E. Rolls, Esquire; Cindy Sherman and Michel Auder; Dean Stathacos; Nancy Weekly; Edward J. Wozniak; and anonymous donors. (This list represents donors as of the time of publication; Hallwalls gratefully acknowledges all additional funders.)

The Burchfield-Penney Art Center at Buffalo State College is supported, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, the City of Buffalo, the County of Erie, and the Institute of Museum Services, a federal agency that offers general operating support to the nation's museums. The Center is accredited by the American Association of Museums.

Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center is supported in part with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts; the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; the City of Buffalo; the County of Erie; and by grants and contributions from the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, The Buffalo Foundation, The Cameron Baird Foundation, The Nicholas Patterson Perpetual Fund, M&T Bank, The Buffalo News, Dr. and Mrs. Armand J. Castellani, and the members of Hallwalls. Hallwalls is a member of the National Association of Artists' Organizations (NAAO) and the National Alliance of Media Arts and Cultures (NAMAC).

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

Special thanks to Anthony Bannon for making available transcripts of interviews he conducted for another project in 1993 and 1994 with Vito Acconci, Nancy Dwyer, Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, Helene Winer, and Michael Zwack.

The editor is indebted to Victoria Reis and Helen Brunner for the transcript of Patrick O'Connell's remarks at the 10th National NAAO Conference; to Ed Sobala for his help preparing photographs for this publication; to Scot Fisher, Matthew Schwonke, Paul Gevirtzman, Don Kreger, and Bob Kane for resources and advice; and to Cheryl Jackson and Squeaky Wheel for access to computer equipment.

The editors of this book and the present staff of Hallwalls acknowledge with profound respect and gratitude the innumerable and indispensable contributions of its officers and Boards of Directors, past and present, who, in their wisdom and generosity, have guided and supported the organization through good times and bad over its first twenty years. Many past and present Board members speak or are named in these pages in other capacities—as artists, founders, erstwhile staff members, collectors, or donors to the recent exhibition. They and many more unnamed here have contributed to the governance, fiscal well-being, and evolving mission of Hallwalls for over two decades, and for their dedication we are truly grateful.

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to all of the following for submitting written texts and images for this publication:

Bruce Adams	Joe Gibbons	Pat Mills
Chuck Agro	Mike Glier	Frank Moore
James Allen	Mark Goldman	Alan Moore
Mark Anderson	Tony Grajeda	Joseph Nechvatal
Fred Bacher	John Greyson	Anna Kaarina Nenonen
Michael Basinski	Steve Griffith	Kevin Noble
Roberley Bell	John S. Hall	Pat Oleszko
Glenn Belverio	Biff Henrich	Joe Piccillo
David Benders	Kathy High	R.D. Pohl
Bruce Benderson	Debbie Hill	Endi Poskovic
Diane Bertolo	Kevin J. Hosey	J. Puccio
Holly Beye	George Howell	Daniel A. Rigney III
Tony Billoni	Rebecca Howland	Walter Robinson
Juini Booth	Dale Hoyt	David Roche
Linda Brooks	Mike Huber	Christy Rupp
Jürgen Brüning	Richard Huntington	Keith Sanborn
Kathe Burkhart	Cheryl Jackson	Matthew Schwonke
David Butler	Judith Jackson	Keiko Sei
Donna Cameron	Eric M. Jensen	Stuart Sherman
Amy Cappellazzo	Henry Jesionka & Don Keller	Bill Smartt & Mark Misrok
Ellen Carey	Kat Jurati & Alan Van Every	Michael Smith
Yoshiko Chuma	Michael Kaniecki	Alan Sondheim
Charles Clough	David Kennedy	Janet Sorenson
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Robert Creeley	Bruce La Bruce	Judy Treible
Rob Danielson & Terese Agnew	Debra S. Lary	Gayle Tufts
Paul Dickinson	Barbara Lattanzi	Ana Lydia Vega
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Jonas Dos Santos	Aaron Lercher	Alfonso Volo
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Annie Fergerson	Laura McGough	Jan Williams
Dr. Billey Fink	Jeff McMahon	Julie Zando
Kevin Fix	John Maggiotto	Nick Zedd
Nina Freudenheim	Peter A. Massing	Leah Zicari
Manny Fried	Arnold Mesches	
Alex Gelencser	Don Metz	

Thanks also to the following individuals who agreed to be interviewed for this project:

Cecile & Steven Biltekoff	Joe Hryvniak	Sandra H. Olsen
Tony Billoni	Homer Jackson	Debora Ott
Armand J. Castellani	Gary Judkins	Scott Rucker
Charles Clough	Sara Kellner	Douglas Schultz
G. Roger Denson	Liz Lapovsky Kennedy	Matthew Schwonke
Robin Dodds	Charlotta Kotik	Margaret Smith
Stephen Gallagher	Jody Lafond	Eileen Sullivan
Claudia Gould	Fern Levin	Jonathon Welch
Jack Griffiths	Daniel Levine	Charles A. Wright, Jr.
Lorna C. Hill	Gail Nicholson	
Catherine Howe	Gary Nickard	